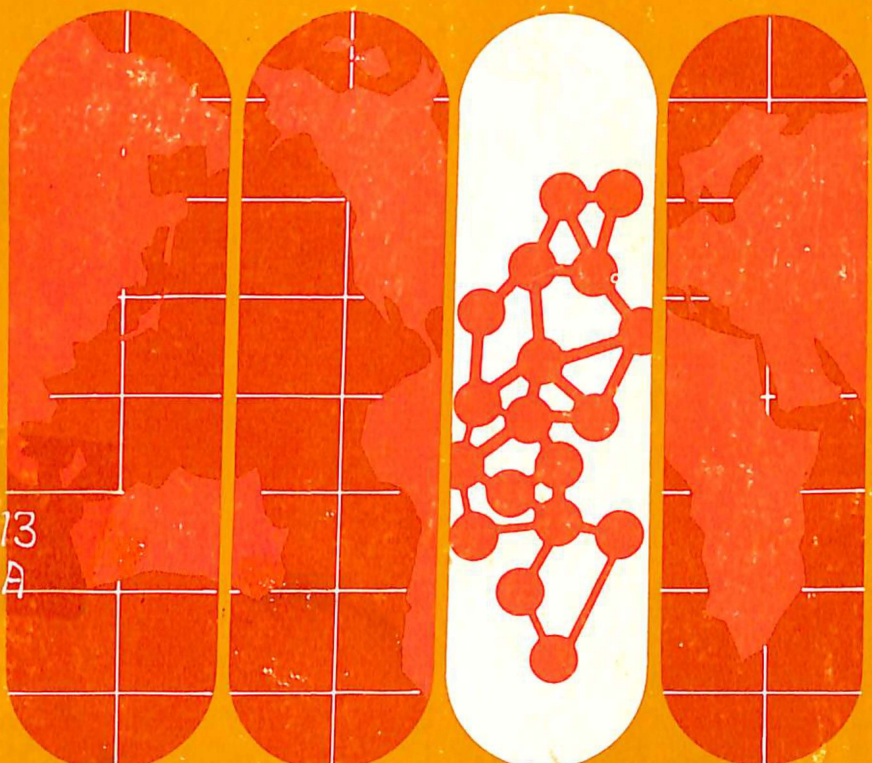
Government in the Modern World

Paul Y. Hammond & Nelson W. Polsby, General Editors

AMERICAN STRATEGY IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

DAVID W. TARR



'HE MODERN WORLD

L EDITORS
Nelson W. Polsby

LITICS
Hayward R. Alker, Jr.

AL INSTITUTIONS
Robert C. Fried

'Y IN AMERICAN POLITICS
Ralph M. Goldman

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP
Erwin C. Hargrove

INTEREST GROUPS AND LOBBYING
Abraham Holtzman

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IN AMERICAN POLITICS
Charles O. Jones

THE SUPREME COURT IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS
Samuel Krislov

THEORY AND THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM
Charles A. McClelland

THE COLD WAR IN TRANSITION
David S. McLellan

TRENDS IN WORLD POLITICS
Bruce M. Russett

AMERICAN STRATEGY IN THE NUCLEAR AGE
David W. Tarr

American Strategy in the Nuclear Age

David W. Tarr
THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

The Macmillan Company, New York
Collier–Macmillan Limited, London

First Printing

Library of Congress catalog card number: 66–14216

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, NEW YORK
COLLIER–MACMILLAN CANADA, LTD., TORONTO, ONTARIO

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Preface

This book represents an effort to draw together in very brief compass the basic themes in the development and employment of American power during the past two decades. The evolution of American strategy over this period is analyzed in terms of technological and political developments that compelled responses by the United States. The book seeks to place American policy both in the context of world politics and within the framework of the domestic political process. It focuses upon the development of American military power and the policies that formulate its uses.

It is, nevertheless, a book about American foreign policy. It is not an exhaustive history of postwar foreign policy, but seeks instead to place the development of military instruments, forces, and doctrines in political perspective. Military policy cannot be separated from its foreign policy context. It is an integral part of foreign policy.

If this book exhibits a prejudice, it is that military power is both a necessary and vital aspect of national power. It needs to be studied, understood, and properly used to further the purposes of our society. The American government has come a long way, since 1945, toward integrating military power into the fabric of American foreign policy, some might think too far. But whatever one's view, the reasons for the development and use of American military power must be taken into account in any intelligent and comprehensive review of American foreign policy. It is my hope that this book contributes to that objective.

D. W. T.

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Burdens of Leadership

For the past two decades the United States has undertaken a role of world leadership in the quest for international security and peace. Having been drawn into two world wars in spite of her efforts to remain neutral, the United States emerged from the second great conflagration deeply committed to the avoidance of a third world war. The reaction of a previous generation to world war had culminated in blind isolationism; the response in 1945, however, manifested an optimistic internationalism. It was the dawn of the nuclear age and the United States was committed to the construction of a new world of international order and cooperation. The American government tried to implement the promises of international harmony through the United Nations, but its efforts were frustrated by the reality of the international power struggle in general and by the intransigence of Soviet diplomacy in particular.

At that time the United States was the sole possessor of atomic weapons. In order to prevent the spread of atomic power, the American government sought briefly and futilely to turn the atomic monopoly over to an international authority that would control the development of nuclear power and enforce its peaceful application. Disillusioned by its failure to proscribe the development of atomic power along national lines and by the inability of the United Nations to translate the wartime alliance among the great powers into a cooperative and harmonious framework for postwar diplomacy, the United States turned its attention to more traditional forms of security.

In many respects the United States was ill-prepared for the burdens of political and military leadership that were thrust on it a generation ago. America's transition from isolationist bystander to responsible world leader came about not through choice but necessity. It was the product of war and unsettled peace. Traditionally unprepared for war and historically unaccustomed to the pursuit of "power politics" in time of peace, the United States stood at the periphery of world politics during the years preceding the two great wars of this century. In neither case was the American government committed to a foreign policy designed to *deter* war by means other

than moral suasion. American political interests were narrowly defined—too narrowly defined as it turned out—because the wars that burst forth ultimately threatened the security of the United States by disrupting the international power balances that invisibly shielded the American nation from transoceanic harm.

The United States emerged from the Second World War predominant among Western powers, yet it might have reverted to its isolationist role if it were not for two dimensions of danger that conspired against it: military technology and international politics—the atomic bomb and the Soviet Union. The termination of hostilities in Europe and Asia in 1945 did not in its reality correspond to American expectations for peace. The United States had demobilized its armed forces in great haste, but it was leaving behind in Europe and Asia areas vastly weakened by the destruction of the war and the disruption of stable political and economic systems. While the United States was dismantling its military power, the Soviet Union was consolidating its wartime gains and deploying its armed forces in a posture menacing to the rest of the world.

Had it followed its traditional impulse and turned away from international politics, the United States would have left many nations helpless before political, economic, and military forces that threatened their survival and, ultimately, American security. Moreover, having failed to turn nuclear weapons over to an international authority, the United States faced the prospect that an "aggressor nation" might some day possess what was presumed to be the "ultimate weapon"—the atomic bomb. This was not the kind of peace for which the United States had fought, but there was little choice. As if to seal America's fate as leader of the Western nations, the heavy-handed diplomacy of the Soviet Union—in what in retrospect appears to have been the Communists' most monumental blunder—provoked the United States into direct opposition to the policies and aims of the Russian government. In the United Nations, and in Germany, Iran, Poland, Greece, Turkey, and Korea, the Soviet Union imposed its demands or its will with a truculence that shocked and dismayed the government and the people of the United States. In response to these pressures, the United States began to mobilize the forces of the West, setting the stage for a Cold War centered in the bipolarity of power between the two postwar giants, the Soviet Union and the United States.

In the twenty years that have passed since the close of World War II, the United States has pursued, without satisfaction, solutions

to these two overriding problems: pacification of a hostile Communist camp, and the elimination of nuclear weapons from military arsenals. Unable to attain its immediate and largely peaceful aspirations through an effective world organization in which disputes could be resolved without violence and through which atomic weapons could be forever banned from national military forces, the United States felt compelled to rely for its national security on those very instruments it feared most in the hands of others—atomic weapons.

Military Power and Foreign Policy

It is the purpose of this book to set forth some of the major elements of the American effort to establish a strategy fully responsive to world politics in the nuclear age. Since World War II, the United States government has been attempting to resolve its two major foreign policy problems—the threat of expanding Communist power and the danger of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, these issues have converged. The persistent questions of the past two decades have been, in essence, "What should we do about nuclear weapons?" and "What should be done to thwart the Communist threat?" The answer generally has been to employ the first to deter the second. Unable either to banish nuclear weapons or to mitigate Communist power, we have attempted to design a foreign policy in which nuclear weapons enhance our security.

Nuclear weapons have been a central element of American strategy. During the period of the atomic monopoly the United States relied very heavily on its atomic bombs to insure its security. But exclusive reliance upon nuclear power was both dangerous and ineffective. Ultimately the United States had to develop an elaborate panoply of military power, including the rebuilding of its ground forces, the deployment of a substantial segment of its combat power abroad, the construction of military alliances, and the development of complementary military and economic aid programs to reinforce the security system that was under construction. The deterrent scheme that the United States developed came to depend on two basic capabilities: The capacity to punish an adversary by launching a strategic strike against his cities and military installations; and the capacity to deny him territorial gain by meeting and defeating his military thrusts locally. The former required long-range nuclear bombardment capabilities, and the latter the deployment of combat power abroad in conjunction with allied local defense efforts.

In the pages that follow, the broad outlines of this strategy are traced from their inceptions in the late 1940's, to the present. Special attention is given to the concept of deterrence as it develops from vague policy to operational commitment. Moreover, these strategic formulations are placed within the context of the American policy-making structure so that the process by which the strategies emerge are seen in relation to both domestic political conditions and the demands of international politics.

There are those who have argued that America's foreign policy has been misdirected, that our preoccupation with nuclear weapons and other instruments of military power during the Cold War and the consequent search for military solutions to political problems reveal an endemic failure to comprehend the complexities of international politics. No one should deny the intricate nature of contemporary international politics, or should anyone claim that the United States can resolve its international affairs by military instruments alone. The United States employs other means besides military power to support its diplomatic objectives. This book emphasizes the military instruments because the underlying theme of American post-war policy has been the quest for national security. It would be a serious mistake to assume that all the international problems encountered by the United States since 1945 can be subsumed under the categories "military armaments" and "Communist hostilities." But it is an elemental fact of American foreign policy of the past twenty years that the growing danger of nuclear war—combined with and related directly to persistent threats mounted by the Soviet Union and its allies—has required urgent and compelling attention by American policy makers to the detriment (from the viewpoint of American interests) of other important problems. The emphasis on military policy in recent times is more the consequence of compulsion —a result of the policy makers' perceptions of threats that require military responses—than an otherwise deliberate choice to base foreign policy primarily on military considerations.

Thus, American foreign policy and American military power have been intimately related policy questions. The purpose of this volume is to illuminate this interrelationship. The main thread of the story is to be found in the developing conception of deterrence and in the development of specific strategies of deterrence as methods for achieving America's two most immediate and perplexing goals: the reduction of the Communist threat and the avoidance of war. The focus of this book, therefore, is on the central element of American strategy in the nuclear age—the quest for national security.

CHAPTER 2

Military Power and Military Policy

War and Survival

Technology has produced such weapons of horror and destruction that war now threatens the very survival of mankind. Dour predictions are made by novelists, scholars, and politicians to the effect that the destruction of civilization is imminent and that men and nations have no other choice than to put aside petty differences and quickly transform the swords of warfare into the plowshares of peace.

The fact of the revolutionary extension of military capabilities, now culminated in nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles, is a regrettable reality of our times. But the simplicity of the choice —to disarm or to die—is challenged by the political infeasibility of a grand and permanent solution. If there is, indeed, no alternative to peace, nations have yet to behave in deference to this proposition. There is little evidence that nations, large or small, are acting on the assumption that there are but two main courses of action, total annihilation or total survival. Indeed, although we can conclude that contemporary military technology has clearly heightened the insecurity of all nations, we must also note that the quest for military power as a method for enhancing national security is, as it has been throughout history, unabated. In short, in spite of the alleged requisite for disarmament, nations behave today as if military power remained, as it was in the past, a crucial instrument of national power and an essential means of national survival.

No one disputes the fact that nuclear technology has placed at the disposal of a growing number of nations the capacity to annihilate a larger and larger segment of an adversary's population. It is now widely accepted that the two major nuclear powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, possess the military wherewithal to destroy a fraction of the opponent's population that, depending on the type of attack and the efficacy of the victim's defenses, approaches totality. The atomic bombs used against Japan in 1945, primitive in destructive power in comparison to today's nuclear weapons, were approximately one thousand times more powerful than the largest conventional bombs used during World War II. Atomic bombs are measured in terms of kilotons, that is, thousands of tons of TNT equivalent.

But the power of thermonuclear weapons is expressed in megatons—in other words, millions of tons of conventional explosive energy. The weapons in the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers now range from sub-kiloton battlefield atomics to bombs measured in tens of megatons. Indeed, in 1961 the Soviet Union tested a nuclear device in excess of 50 megatons. And a 100-megaton bomb is within the range of feasibility. Of course, the destructive power of a bomb does not increase in proportion to the increase in energy released. Two 10-megaton bombs are more destructive than one 20-megaton bomb. There is a limit to the practical development of large nuclear explosives. This limit has, in all probability, already been reached; but nuclear weapons are weapons of terror as well as instruments of military consequence. Moreover, while nuclear weapons have become increasingly destructive, the methods for their delivery to targets have been rapidly improved with respect to range, speed, and accuracy. At the same time, the prospects for defense by interception have declined alarmingly.

In other words, not only has nuclear technology produced rampant extensions in the destructive power of offensive weaponry but also air and missile technology has reduced in a startling fashion the capacity of nations to defend themselves against strategic weapons. Bernard Brodie has observed that modern weapons developments have dramatically transformed our military problems by ". . . the loss of the defensive function as an inherent capability of our major offensive forces."[1] In short, increased offensive potential is not matched by improved defensive capabilities.

These facts are impressive—indeed, frightening. But like all facts, they do not entirely speak for themselves. Reasonable men differ on the prospects for, and potential consequences of, war in the nuclear age. The existence of nuclear weapons is a fact, but the prospects for their use in specific circumstances must be expressed in terms of probabilities. We know, for example, that although nuclear weapons have been in existence for two decades, they have not, since 1945, been used in any of the numerous conflicts that have occurred. We suspect that the consequences of using nuclear weapons are so extraordinary for user and victim alike that nations are reluctant to resort to such terrible means. Indeed, a kind of mutual deterrence, or balance of terror, has developed because the major possessors of nuclear weapons threaten each other. A nuclear power is not immune

[1] Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 225; italics omitted.

from the consequences of a nuclear war and may be, therefore, deterred from engaging in it.

But deterrence by nuclear threat is not considered to be a totally reliable guarantor of peace. The fact that nuclear weapons have not been used in warfare since Hiroshima and Nagasaki is not proof that they will not be used in the future. In assessing the military risks that confront us, therefore, we must make certain distinctions that will guide our thinking and our estimates. For example, obviously every war will not be a *nuclear* war, in spite of the misplaced popular assumption that "war" and "nuclear war" are, in this age of terror weapons, equivalent. When we speak of "war," we must specify the *type* of conflict we have in mind. In spite of the availability of nuclear weapons since 1945, wars since that time have been confined to nonnuclear conflicts. The potential range of conflict extends across the spectrum of violence, from the terrorist tactics of local insurgents to the use of thermonuclear bombs in a strategic strike by a great power. In spite of nuclear weapons, there still exists the possibility of any number of military engagements to arise, of which large-scale nuclear wars are quite probably the least likely.

There are those who argue that the prospect of nuclear holocaust has been overemphasized, immobilizing us from consideration of more likely and perhaps, realistically, more threatening possibilities. The doctrine of the inevitability of total annihilation is challenged by those who suggest that other less drastic possibilities exist that demand our attention, study, and action. It is argued that nations can survive failures in deterrence, and that even nuclear wars of less than totally destructive consequences are conceivable. According to this view, nuclear deterrence is a reasonable strategy; and the nations that employ it must understand not only the requirements for successful deterrence but also the preparations that are necessary to augment offensive and defensive actions in the event that deterrence fails.

Policy makers who accept these assumptions have had to consider the possible outcomes of their strategies, including the prospects for survival in the event of nuclear war. One prominent representative of this viewpoint, Herman Kahn, has explicitly urged the necessity for distinguishing between various levels of postwar damage and death. Kahn has argued not only that the United States could survive a nuclear war but also that by taking appropriate actions now in terms of strategic warfare planning and active and passive defense measures, casualty rates could be reduced considerably. But his analysis

forces the reader to consider "unthinkable" propositions: Can we distinguish between 40 million and 80 million dead? Will the "survivors envy the dead"? How many years will it take for the nation to recuperate? How high a casualty rate will be "acceptable" for the policy makers who must decide between peace and war?[2] His critics charge that such analyses contribute to the inevitability of nuclear war by making the unthinkable thinkable and by presenting nuclear war as an event with which a nation can cope and through which it can survive.

Is it morally callous to suggest that total nuclear warfare is not inevitable, nor even the most likely military event of our time? If one were to argue that total nuclear war is improbable and, *therefore, need not concern us,* the charge would be well placed. A cataclysmic event, such as any large-scale nuclear war would undoubtedly be, need only occur once for its significance to outweigh all less disastrous events. It is because of the disastrous consequences of nuclear war that we are concerned. Yet it is also because of its disastrous consequences that one must assume that nations normally will be deterred from resorting to catastrophic warfare. We already know that small wars occur with greater frequency than large wars. That does not mean that large wars are less important. But it does undermine the oversimplified, if frequent contention that "the next war will be the last one." In the nuclear age the survival of nations is literally at stake. Yet clearly nuclear war is not inevitable simply because the weapons exist. They challenge the ingenuity of man. They constitute a new factor in international politics. But it may well be that, because a nuclear war raises the prospect of a Pyrrhic victory, Winston Churchill's memorable statement of nuclear deterrence reflects our contemporary dilemma: "Then it may well be that we shall, by a process of sublime irony, have reached a stage in the story where safety will be the sturdy child of terror, and survival the twin brother of annihilation."[3]

Whatever one's personal feelings on this matter and whatever the future may hold, from the perspective of this presentation, it is a most significant fact that nations have crossed a period of two decades *without* nuclear war. It is equally significant that during these past twenty years nations have frequently resorted to force and that military power has been employed as a key instrument of national

[2] Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), Chaps. 1–3.

[3] Speech to the House of Commons, March 1, 1955.

policy. Decades of success in deterring nuclear war do not demonstrate the infallibility of nuclear deterrent strategies. One may even judge the policies of the past to be in error and to see in them the roots of future conflict. But, as this book seeks to demonstrate, military factors have played a determining role in American strategy; and nuclear weapons have been a most significant aspect in it.

Wars As Instruments of Policy

Wars have not always endangered national survival. There was a time in the history of European politics when armies were thought to be the playthings of kings, instruments of a sovereign's will, to be maneuvered on the chess board of international politics. The political conditions that gave rise to such limited and sophisticated projections of power by means of armed forces were, perhaps, unique. But the lessons are, at least by some, considered to be universal.

The great exponent of the political essence of warfare was the German strategist, Karl von Clausewitz. For him, war was but an extension of political relations, the breakdown of peaceful interactions, but not the termination of politics. Describing wars of the Eighteenth Century, Clausewitz wrote:

> Thus war became essentially a regular game in which time and chance shuffled the cards; but in its significance, it was only diplomacy somewhat intensified, a more forceful way of negotiating, in which battles and sieges were the diplomatic notes. To obtain some moderate advantage in order to make use of it in negotiations for peace was the aim even of the most ambitious.[4]

Clausewitz argued that war grew out of political motives and, therefore, only made sense if it was governed by political objectives and employed as a means to such ends. He wrote,

> Accordingly, war can never be separated from political intercourse, and if, in the consideration of the matter, this occurs anywhere, all the threads of the different relations are, in a certain sense, broken, and we have before us a senseless thing without an object.[5]

This rationalized conception of war—the idea that it is a means to a political end—is prescriptive rather than descriptive. Wars, as Clausewitz himself had written, had sometimes gotten out of hand and had been fought as senseless extensions of organized violence.

[4] Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. O. J. M. Jolles, (Washington, D.C.: Combat Forces Press, 1953), p. 580.

[5] Ibid., p. 596.

Twentieth Century experience demonstrates the destructive character and explosive potential of warfare in an industrial age. Although one may agree that war, if it is to be fought at all, should be constrained by rational calculations that make the means commensurate with the objectives at stake, we have learned through bitter and painful history that war is not easily controlled, that the means available grow more destructive with industrial advancement, and that the political objectives of nations have become more, rather than less, extensive. In short, the principal political value of war has been more often abused than observed.

Unfortunately, the capacity and will to use force in international politics remains a basic fact of contemporary politics. The potential consequences of modern warfare are truly horrendous; yet nations have been unable to agree upon methods for limiting or eliminating war. In other words, nations still resort to war as an instrument of national policy. War must be understood, therefore, in political terms. It can, because of the hazards of modern military technology, become unlimited and self-destructive, "a senseless thing without an object." But the reason that force is employed lies in the obvious fact that certain highly valued national goals are frequently found to be unobtainable by peaceful means, yet are deemed vital enough to the national interest to risk the consequences of armed conflict. That is, some men and some nations still find some things worth fighting for, whatever the risk. And some may be enough!

Military Power and Foreign Policy

Military power and war are related but not synonymous instruments of national power. War as national policy means the pursuit of objectives by armed force. It involves the clash of arms, physical violence, compulsion. Military power is essential to successful warfare, but it is not identical with warfare because military power may exist and be used *without* resorting to violence. All nations possess military power to the extent that they have devoted a portion of their resources to the development and maintenance of the instrumentalities of warfare—the armed forces and weapons with which to fight. Military power is used not only in the act of warfare, to defend against attack or to launch an attack, but also (and perhaps more significantly) to support a nation's diplomacy by making its policies credible. Military power exists as a *sanction* for a nation's foreign policies; it is used as a deterrent to the aggressive designs of

other states; it underscores diplomatic maneuvers; it is, in short, an essential ingredient in political psychology. By manifesting the capacity to resort to force, it serves to influence the behavior of other nations.

Military power is, then, a major factor in national power and a key instrument of foreign policy. It should not be confused with war itself—the actual resort to violence—because military power is so often used, through threat, demonstration, or implication, to obtain political objectives *without* violence. It is a key element in a nation's political arsenal, a factor for persuasion and dissuasion. It is inherently neither offensive nor defensive. As an instrument of policy, it depends on how it is used.

How military power is to be used is a matter of national strategy. A nation's *strategy*—by which is meant the overall plan for implementing national objectives through the choice and management of political, military, economic, and psychological means—is conditioned by the limitations of national power (territory, geography, population, natural resources) and by its national goals. It has been wisely observed that ". . . military power does not automatically translate itself into national security."[6] That is the task of national strategy. But it is also more than that. For military power serves a state not only to enhance its security but also to support its wider political objectives. That is, nations rely upon their military power beyond the defensive function for the purpose of positive implementation of foreign policies.

The Making of National Strategy

We turn now to the processes by which foreign and military policies are made in the United States. In order to evaluate critically the strategies of the United States over the past two decades, one must appreciate the institutional and political circumstances in which they were developed. Strategies are not formulated in a vacuum. A political and structural context makes a clear and significant imprint on the policies themselves.[7]

The making of national strategy involves the formulation of plans for the pursuit of specific political objectives through the exercise of

[6] Robert E. Osgood, *Limited War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 14.

[7] See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), for a comprehensive treatment of this subject.

variations of means alternatives. Policy choices depend on interacting factors that we might sum up as *ends-situations-means* relationships. That is, policy makers operate within a framework in which America's political goals (ends) are challenged by particular events (situations) that in turn require specific actions (means) by the United States. Goals must constantly be defined and reevaluated, events must be interpreted in terms of these goals, and the actions undertaken must be designed to enhance goal achievement. For example, the United States is committed as a matter of national policy to the defense of Berlin. A Soviet move against Berlin would require definition of America's commitment in the context of that challenge, and a choice of actions from among political, military, or other responses presumed to further implement that commitment.

But this does not adequately explain the political and institutional complexities. Who makes such decisions? What persons, agencies, and allies are consulted? Where do the responsibilities for choice and action lie? Is the decision made public? In a world of nuclear hazard, the requirements of national security impose a grave and complex task on those charged with the responsibility for formulating and implementing American foreign and military policies.

Strategy-making would be accomplished, ideally, by highly rationalized procedures within a structure that reflects, in organization, its own purposes. That is, the structure would be defined functionally, with all the major participants in the process located within it. In the United States, the responsibility for military and foreign affairs is shared by the Legislative and Executive branches of government. However, the formal description of the legislative and executive agencies is misleading. Congress, although it holds the purse strings, has less to say about strategy-making than at first appears. And although the executive agencies are structured in hierarchical fashion with deliberate lines of authority and responsibility, the actual process of policy-making cuts across the structure in a variety of ways. Moreover, not all the participants in the policy process are formally located within the legislative and executive agencies responsible for defense and foreign policy.

If we look at the participants in the policy process itself, rather than the formal structure, we see that, at the top, there exist clusters of political leaders, agencies, and their staffs—the President, the White House staff, and other principal advisers (some of whom may not be associated with the government), the National Security Council, the Bureau of the Budget, the Atomic Energy Commission, the

Central Intelligence Agency, key members and committees of Congress, certain high officials of the State and Defense Departments, and military professionals. These groupings oversee the bureaucratic core of the policy-making and implementing activity, which is largely located within the Departments of State and Defense. Overlaying the formal hierarchical structure is an elaborate series of *ad hoc* and permanent committees and agencies, interstitially located in the hierarchy, through which the major participants in the policy process relate their activities. The overall system is a large, flexible, and disparate community of individuals and agencies. It is difficult to manage, particularly because of its pluralistic character, and because it operates within a democratic political framework: discipline and authority are resented, access to information and influence is normally considered a "right," and "politicking" is quite naturally the preferred method of operation.

The process of policy-making, therefore, is characteristically more "political" than it is "rational." The system is predominantly devoted to making policy choices and implementing them on the basis of the accommodation of conflicting values and groups identified with those values. Negotiation, bargaining, threat, and compromise are the methods for achieving consensus and support for specific policies. Because of the pragmatism of American politics, priority is given to policy options that can get through the system—those that are or can be made widely acceptable to the participants in the process. Choosing the "right" policy, that is, the alternative most likely to achieve the desired foreign policy goals (and this is, after all, what is meant by "rationality") is less important than choosing an acceptable one: if a given option, no matter how reasonable on its own merits, is not acceptable to the most powerful members of the policy-making process, it cannot be seriously entertained as a realistic option. Consensus-building is a salient feature of the policy process. A kind of concurrent majority system operates: in many cases, the making and executing of specific programs is undertaken only after the most powerful and interested groups within the national security community have been consulted and have given their approval. Interagency relations, therefore, often resemble international relations—negotiation and bargaining are a natural part of the political relationship.

If the policy-making process in national security affairs is characterized by compromise and accommodation among conflicting interests, it also tends to proceed by a confusion of incremental adjustments rather than by discrete and distinctive departures from previous

policies or programs. This characteristic has been aptly described as one of "muddling through."[8] Those who are engaged in the process usually do not see themselves as "decision makers" or innovators, ". . . but only as inputers, recommenders, vetoers, and approvers."[9] There is a feeling of inheritance rather than parentage among the participants. Programs and policies have an on-going quality and a momentum that few persons feel they are able to counter, control, or manage by themselves.

In addition to the consensus-building and incremental nature of the policy-making process, there are two other somewhat unique features of the process in the national security area: secrecy and technological complexity. The arena in which decision-making takes place must, of necessity, be shielded from public view. The public, and in many cases its representatives in Congress, will not normally be aware of or cannot understand the technical complexities of the issues and the ranges of choice under consideration within the confines of the national security community. In particularly sensitive areas, decisions are never publicly announced. In some cases, policies are discovered by discerning members of the press or uncovered by Congressional investigations. In others, the conflict over issues spills over into the public sector because certain participants in the process feel that their interests are being ignored. But under normal circumstances, the circle of participants is strictly limited and secrecy prevails over publicity.[10]

In summary, the policy process in national security affairs is characterized by incremental rather than radical innovative adjustments in programs; and its participants place a high priority on internal consensus and operate within a political context obscured by technological complexities and shielded by the necessity for secrecy.

It should not be surprising that critics of American foreign and military policies often find inconsistencies, duplications, and incoherencies in these policies. The policy-making process in the field of national security affairs is so similar to other types of public policy that the consequences are bound to be inefficient. There are multiple and conflicting policy goals; there are multiple and conflicting means

[8] Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review*, XIX (Spring, 1959), p. 79.

[9] Roger Hilsman, "The Foreign-policy Consensus: An Interim Research Report," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, III (December, 1959), p. 363.

[10] For an elaboration of this point and its implications, see my "Military Technology and the Policy Process," *The Western Political Quarterly*, XVIII (March, 1965), pp. 135–48.

for implementing goals; and there are competing groups of individuals and agencies who seek to promote their own favorite programs and policies.

This process is not tolerated without limit, however, because national security affairs are closely related to the most basic of all political values—national survival. What has been described is the essential *character* of the policy process. Many adjustments have been made in that process in response to the requisites of the nuclear age. It has been centralized and rationalized. The Defense Department in particular has been subjected to reforms that have unified the structure and strengthened the authority of the central figures in the policy process. Some complain that this has been accomplished at the expense of consensus-building politics and that military and/or civilian "czars" who threaten the democratic processes have been created. Yet centralized authority has become a necessity. National security policies must be responsive to international as well as domestic demands. The politics of the policy-making process is more appropriate to the domestic sector, authority and discipline to the international. Tensions exist between the two. Over the past two decades the authority and influence of the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and the National Security Council have increased at the expense of freer internal politics in the defense community. Yet policy making remains essentially pluralistic. In the tension between domestic and international requisites, the international tend to determine the outcome when crises emerge and domestic to reclaim attention when the crises subside.

In the recent history of American military and foreign policy, much effort has been directed toward achieving a balance between the most important domestic values—in particular, reductions in defense spending and an equitable distribution of defense funds among competing interest groups—and the most significant national security values, especially the mitigation of hostile threats and the deterrence of nuclear and other conflicts. The strategy of nuclear deterrence has emerged in several different forms as the method for achieving this balance. Its success, as we shall see, has not been as great as its proponents have promised.

CHAPTER 3

The Cold War Begins

Peace Without Harmony

After World War II, the United States sought nothing short of a restructuring of international relationships. The traditional struggles for power and dominance were to be replaced by a universal commitment to peacekeeping through the institution of the United Nations. The new world was to be based on principles of internationalism and collective security; it was presumed that the experience of the Second World War had at last built a firm and lasting consensus among all nations.

The realities of the postwar world did not, of course, conform to American wartime expectations. The United States emerged from the war unscathed and with its national power vastly enhanced in every category. But Europe lay in ruins. Conditions in France, Italy, and Germany were chaotic. Great Britain continued to exhibit strains that were a consequence of her extreme wartime burdens. The Soviet Union, although severely damaged by the war, stood predominant in Eastern and Central Europe, refusing to relinquish its grip in the countries it had occupied in the course of its drive to defeat Germany. In Asia conditions were no better. The United States had triumphed over Japan but American military forces occupied only the peripheral islands rather than the Asian mainland. In China the civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communists continued unabated, with Communist gains forecasting defeat for the Kuomintang. Finally, the reversion of colonial areas to nominal European control did not mark the end of conflict, but instead signaled a new stage in social unrest.

The United States had expected Great Britain to resume her political responsibilities in Europe and her colonial responsibilities abroad; but British power had been drained by the war, and she faltered. The United States also looked forward to an early reduction in its occupation responsibilities in the defeated countries, a hope that was not realized. The American government expected the Soviet Union to allow free elections in Poland and other eastern European countries, as Stalin had promised at Yalta, but found instead that the Russians were systematically eliminating opposition leaders and installing regimes of their own choosing. And the United States

looked toward cooperation between the great powers in the United Nations only to find the Soviet Union was suspicious, hostile, and uncooperative.

Instead of postwar harmony there was chaos and conflict. Everywhere the power of the Soviet Union appeared to threaten the security of the nations on its periphery. Europe stood divided at the farthest point of Russian advance. Soviet troops remained in Iran and North Korea and their removal seemed beyond immediate resolution. Turkey was subjected to Soviet pressures over the control of the Dardanelles, Greek Communists were in insurrection and were supplied by Bulgarian and Yugoslav sources, and Chinese Communists were accomplishing rapid gains at the expense of the Nationalist Government, although the latter was supported by the United States and nominally recognized by the Soviet Union.

In spite of these problems the United States pursued a course throughout the remaining months of 1945 and into 1946 clearly indicating that although it stood preeminent as the world's greatest military power and sole possessor of nuclear bombs, it had no intention of exploiting its new power. Demobilization of American armed forces began as soon as Germany capitulated and proceeded at a rapid pace after Japan's surrender. Only two months after the defeat of Japan it was estimated that the combat effectiveness of most American fighting units had declined by 50 to 75 percent.[1] In Europe, the most critical area in terms of the Soviet threat, the strength of the U.S. Army declined in the ten months following the termination of hostilities from 3,500,000 men to 400,000 men. There was no air force left to speak of on the continent, and the military reserves in the United States were dwindling to insignificance. By mid-1946 the Russians had moved their forces to strategic positions in the German flatlands ". . . and so overmatched Allied strength that our intelligence reports gravely doubted whether, if a clash came, our troops would be capable of making an effective retreat to the North German ports where they might be evacuated without catastrophe."[2]

It took the United States almost a year and a half to reverse its course and respond vigorously to the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union. In the interim the United States had weakened itself by choice, for there was almost no support for sizable peacetime

[1] John C. Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army*, Department of the Army Pamphlet 20–210, July, 1952, p. 291.

[2] Theodore H. White, *Fire in the Ashes* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1953), p. 32.

military forces. The dissociation of military power and foreign policy was virtually complete. The United States maintained wide-ranging aspirations in international affairs, but the American government was reluctant to conclude that military power would continue to be an important adjunct of the nation's diplomacy. The United Nations had, after all, been created to put power politics to rest and to make each nation's security the business of all nations.

However, the aggressive diplomacy of the Soviet Union served to jar American foreign policy away from its idealistic course. American expectations about international cooperation were directly contradicted by Soviet policies in the United Nations and by Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The first real test of American diplomacy came in the Middle East where the Soviet Union put pressure on Iran, Turkey, and Greece in what was apparently a concerted pincer movement designed to achieve, in the early months of postwar consolidation, Russia's traditional aspiration for access to the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. In Iran the Soviet Union violated the Tripartite Treaty of 1942 (an agreement for joint British and Russian occupation of Iran during the war, with the proviso that the troops be withdrawn not later than six months after the cessation of hostilities) by fomenting rebellion in northern Iran and by refusing to withdraw its armed forces after the war. Appeals to the Security Council of the United Nations had little effect; but with concerted pressure from the United States and Great Britain, the Russians negotiated a settlement with the Iranian government in which it was agreed that the troops would be removed in return for Iranian concessions to Soviet demands for control over oil resources. In the midst of these negotiations, the United States made its position known in a sharp message of protest that was "... couched in a far stiffer and more peremptory language than any previous communication to the Soviet government since recognition."[3] To add to the pointed warning, the battleship Missouri was sent to Istanbul, ostensibly to return the body of the Turkish Ambassador who had died in Washington.

In the face of these pressures the Soviets backed down. The Russian troops were withdrawn and Iranian forces took control of the northern provinces. In the meantime, the Iranian parliament rejected the agreements for oil concessions. The Soviet Union had been dealt a sharp rebuff.

[3] Robert Rossow, Jr., "The Battle of Azerbaijan, 1946," *The Middle East Journal*, X (Winter, 1956), p. 22. See also Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, II (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1956), pp. 94–95.

At the same time, the Soviet government put great pressure on Turkey to grant concessions in the Turkish Straits. In March 1945, the USSR denounced the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and notified the Turks that a resumption of good relations depended on a proper revision of the Montreux Convention (that governed control arrangements for the Dardanelles), granting the Soviet Union bases in the Straits and the "return" of the districts of Kars and Ardahan to Russia. The United States had at first favored limited concessions to the Russians in the spirit of cooperation that still prevailed in 1945; but by 1946, the Soviets had become so aggressively adamant in their demands that the United States, joined by Great Britain, was moved to reject explicitly Russia's proposals. Indeed, the United States had moved so far away by mid-1946 from its policy of conciliation with respect to the Soviet Union that it is reported that President Truman, after reviewing the global pressures of Soviet diplomacy with his close advisers, commented to the effect ". . . that we might as well find out whether the Russians were bent on world conquest now as in five or ten years."[4]

Thus, by the end of 1946 the United States had twice rejected Soviet demands for access and influence in the Middle East. But in light of the means available at the time, these decisions to stand firm against Soviet threats at the risk of war displayed an alarming disparity between American political objectives and America's capacity to enforce its decisions with military power. The United States was gambling and could expect some political advantage because of its wartime military reputation and its atomic monopoly. But American military weakness was becoming alarmingly clear to its own political leaders and quite probably to the Soviet Union as well.

Ad hoc determinations to stand firm are one thing. But the character of the Soviet global challenge cried out for a deliberate change in American policy: a strategy needed to be devised to meet and thwart the expansionist designs of the Soviet government. The aggressive character of Soviet diplomacy was forcing Washington to reassess its basic assumptions about the postwar world in general and about its relations with the Soviet Union in particular.

The Strategy of Containment

Not all of the officials in the American government were convinced in 1945 that Soviet political aspirations could be pacified by concilia-

[4] Walter Millis (ed.), *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p. 192.

tion and expressions of good will. There was, indeed, a divisive split between those, represented on one hand by Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace, who believed that peace depended on positive efforts by the United States to allay Russian suspicions, and on the other by James Forrestal (Secretary of the Navy and soon-to-be Secretary of Defense), who was convinced that the United States needed to assert itself by building up its strength and actively opposing Soviet pressures. The latter group was in the ascendancy. Its assessments of Soviet behavior seemed to be confirmed by the crises of 1946, but widespread popular demands for demobilization and reduction in federal spending robbed it of immediate political effect.

The United States needed time to adjust to its new global responsibilities, but events were moving very rapidly and becoming more threatening. Meanwhile, the British government had attempted to resume its position as the balancer of European power. Great Britain had long exercised its power in the Middle East to thwart Russian expansion in that region. She had taken on special responsibilities in Iran, Turkey, and Greece in order to further this objective. But Britain found herself on the verge of collapse. She found it difficult to support her own recovery and virtually impossible to rebuild her faltering empire and sustain a foreign policy that could continue to counteract Russian advances. The United States had assumed that Great Britain would retain her great-power status after the war, but in early 1947 the American government was shocked into shedding another illusion. On February 21, 1947, the British government notified the governments of the United States, Greece, and Turkey that it could no longer meet its commitments in the Mediterranean. The civil war in Greece was proving a drastic drain upon British resources. Greece was in danger of imminent collapse and the British government was stating frankly that it could bear the burden no longer.

The American reaction stands out as a turning point in its postwar diplomacy. President Truman and his advisers were informed that the collapse in Greece was perhaps only weeks away. In spite of the temporary setbacks to Russia in Iran and Turkey, the sudden fall of Greece to the Communists threatened a collapse of Europe's eastern flank. Iran and Turkey would be in immediate jeopardy. Yugoslavia was already a Communist state and was insisting upon acquisition of the city of Trieste. Moreover, the psychological blow in Europe of such a significant Soviet victory in the Mediterranean would undoubtedly further demoralize a people already under the

shadows of the Red Army, economic despair, and political instability.

The British note forced the United States to embark upon a new course, "a sudden transformation"[5] from a policy based on a misplaced faith in Soviet cooperation to one of containment of Soviet expansion. The strategy of containment was based on the assumption that the Soviet Union was an intractable foe of the West and that Communist ideology and traditional Russian interests had produced a pattern of thought and action innately antagonistic to the outside world. Such an interpretation of Soviet behavior was persuasively argued by one of the State Department's foremost Russian specialists, George F. Kennan, who, as chargé d'affaires in Moscow cabled an eight-thousand word analysis of Soviet foreign policy to Washington in February 1946. This report received careful attention within the Cabinet.[6] In a published version of that analysis, Kennan argued that Soviet international behavior must be understood in terms of the Communist belief that inherent contradictions between capitalism and socialism would bring about the eventual victory of socialism under the banner of the Soviet Union. This doctrine, he reasoned, produced a patient, confident, expansionist diplomacy that was, on the one hand ". . . more sensitive to contrary force, more ready to yield on the individual sectors of the diplomatic front when that force is felt to be too strong . . ." yet, on the other hand, not ". . . easily defeated or discouraged by a single victory on the part of its opponents."[7] Kennan believed that the policy of the United States against these insistent Soviet pressures ought to be that of ". . . a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." Kennan thus envisaged an American policy of counterpressure that was no less firm and vigilant than that of Russia itself.

The strategy of containment became the basis of American foreign policy. Its first test was the crisis in Greece. On March 12, 1947, barely three weeks after the British government had notified the United States of its inability to continue its support of Greece and Turkey, President Truman went before a joint session of Congress to deliver his historic proclamation of American foreign policy, a

[5] Joseph M. Jones so described the process in *The Fifteen Weeks* (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), p. 259.

[6] See Millis, *Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 135–40.

[7] "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, XX (July, 1947), pp. 566–82.

statement that came to be known as the "Truman Doctrine." The pronouncement of the Truman Doctrine was the first dramatic policy statement on the problem of an overall strategy to cope with the Soviet menace. In it the President outlined the specific problem in Greece and Turkey, stressing the implications for the West if those countries should collapse. But he went on to universalize the problem by asserting that at issue were alternative ways of life:

> One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.
>
> The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.
>
> I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugations by armed minorities or by outside pressure.[8]

President Truman's remedy was to send economic aid and military supplies. He asked Congress to appropriate $400 million for aid to Greece and Turkey and to authorize American civilian and military missions to advise and help train the Greek and Turkish military forces.

As a measure to thwart Communist advances in the eastern Mediterranean, the Truman Doctrine aid program gave some immediate answers. But as the first public pronouncement of the strategy of containment, the Truman Doctrine was deficient in several respects. The sense of urgency was clearly conveyed, but the implication of the message was that the United States was committed to a world-wide anti-Communist crusade in support of free peoples everywhere. The expansion of the Truman Doctrine into an international moral principle had inherent dangers; it did not take into account the limits of American interests and power. Moreover, the Truman Doctrine specified economic and military aid but did not state what military policies were necessary as a result of an American commitment to the containment of Soviet expansion.

However, the President's speech did precipitate a useful debate on American foreign policy objectives. Many groups were shocked by the President's proposal. Some felt that action should be channeled through the United Nations. Isolationists reacted sharply, fearing new

[8] *Department of State Bulletin*, XVI (March 23, 1947), pp. 534–37.

American entanglements. Liberals and leftists feared that a negative and hostile policy on the part of the United States was largely responsible for the breakdown in good relations between the American and Soviet governments. But a majority of Congress and large sectors of the public supported the Truman Doctrine. The aid program was passed and public opinion polls of that period indicate that whatever specific policies were advocated by specialists, the public apparently made only ". . . one primary requirement of American foreign policy: that it be resolute and firm in its opposition to Soviet expansion."[9]

Thus, although the strategy of containment was reflected in the type of policy initiated by the Truman Doctrine, an explicit *official* public presentation was never made. The President's speech to Congress did not mention the word "containment" nor explain the implications of the strategy. Within the government, however, the policy was formulated in the form of a National Security Council paper—NSC–20—probably in late 1947 or early 1948.[10] "Containment" had become a part of partisan political vocabulary and although the Administration was reluctant to embrace it publicly, it was often required to defend it.

Aid for a Troubled Europe

If containment was to be the strategic objective of American foreign policy, more concrete steps were required than a limited aid program to Greece and Turkey. Soviet pressures on Turkey and the guerrilla war in Greece were only facets of a larger problem: the endemic weakness of all the countries of Europe recently engaged in the destructive battles of World War II. The United States was to concentrate at first on economic recovery as a method of stemming Communist advances; but as the relentless pressure continued, it became more and more evident that military measures also would be necessary.

In Washington there was a growing awareness that something had to be done to stop the economic disintegration of Western Europe. The winter of 1946–47 had been extremely severe, and food and coal were in short supply. Purchases from the United States caused a

[9] Gabriel A. Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), p. 106.

[10] Paul Y. Hammond, "NSC–68: Prologue to Rearmament," in Warner R. Schilling, *et al., Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 294.

further drain on dwindling dollar reserves. The crippled industries of Europe were unable to produce sufficient goods to exchange for food and raw materials. By all accounts the economies of Great Britain and Western Europe were on the brink of collapse.

In April work was begun within the State Department to devise a plan for American aid. In May Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson delivered a speech on American foreign economic policy, suggesting the possibility of enlarged aid programs. In June Secretary George C. Marshall set forth the "Marshall Plan" in more precise terms. The United States, he declared, was disposed to receive sympathetically requests for assistance to a "European program" in which all the countries of Europe were encouraged to participate. The key to the proposal was economic cooperation for the joint recovery of the economies of Europe, in other words, inviting a concerted response. As a result, the countries of Western Europe established the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) through which American assistance was to be channeled.

The original proposal did not exclude the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. All European countries were invited to join. Some interest was expressed by these countries but at the last minute the Soviet Union withdrew, undoubtedly because it felt the Marshall Plan would threaten its effort to consolidate its hold over the Eastern European states. In rejecting the Marshall Plan, the Soviet Union confirmed the division of Europe. The "iron curtain" descended across the continent. Had the United States offered aid only to Western Europe, it would have undertaken the blame for the intensification of the Cold War. If the Soviet Union joined the program, it might have been able to disrupt it; indeed, the Marshall Plan probably would have been rejected by Congress. As it was, the Communists denounced the program, making way for the successful implementation of America's most ambitious postwar foreign policy.

While the American government moved to shore up the sagging economies of Western Europe, the Soviet Union continued to consolidate its position of dominance to the east. Opposition groups in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Rumania were purged. In Czechoslovakia the Communists had infiltrated key positions of the government—in particular the police forces. Despite a last-minute effort by anti-Communist members of the government to regain control, they were too late. With the Red Army standing at its borders and the West ill-prepared to defend them, the government yielded to a Communist coup d'état in February 1948. Among the Communist nations,

only Yugoslavia was able to resist Stalin's demand for subservience —and precisely because Marshall Tito controlled his own army.

The Czechoslovakian coup was a severe blow to the West, sharply intensifying the Cold War. What happened in Prague was possible in Paris and Rome. Strong Communist parties harassed the government leaders. Throughout 1947 Communist-led general strikes wracked France and Italy, but the governments held on. In November the American Congress, meeting in special session, voted half a billion dollars in emergency aid to carry Italy and France through the interim period before the Marshall aid program could be fully implemented.

The Berlin Blockade

In Germany the gulf between Soviet objectives and those of the Western powers continued to widen. The American government was convinced by the summer of 1947 that prosperity in Europe hinged in large measure upon the recuperation of Germany. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, continued to press for enormous reparations. Unable to bridge the gap with the Russians, the British, French, and American governments agreed in early 1948 to negotiate among themselves to establish a separate West German government. It was a fateful choice, and one that the French, in particular, were reluctant to accept. But Russian intransigence offered no other alternative.

Resenting both the Marshall Plan and the Western effort to revive the economy and to establish a government in the western sectors of Germany, the Soviet Union acted to force the Western powers out of Berlin. Berlin was located well within the Soviet zone of occupation but was jointly occupied by the Big Four. Beginning in the spring of 1948, The Russians began to harass and delay surface transportation to the city of Berlin from the western sectors of Germany. A currency reform instituted in West Germany established a totally separate economy from that of the Soviet zone; and on June 24, 1948, the reform was extended to the British, French, and American sectors of Berlin itself. On the same day the Russians imposed a total blockade upon all surface transportation into West Berlin.

At that moment, the United States and the Soviet Union moved very close to the brink of war. The commander of the American forces in Germany, General Lucius Clay, recommended that the United States send an armed convoy to the beleaguered city. Presi-

dent Truman decided to pursue a less risky course. Air traffic to the city had not been disrupted; therefore, air transport to Berlin naturally increased. Finding no interference from the Russians, the United States and its European partners undertook a massive, dramatic airlift, the success of which exceeded all expectations. By the spring of 1949, it was evident that the Russian attempt to force the West out of Berlin had failed. The blockade was lifted.

Not only had the Soviet Union failed in its effort to seal off Berlin but it also was unable to prevent the economic and political recovery of West Germany. A democratic government had been established in West Germany; and as a consequence of the dramatic rescue operation for the Berliners, wartime animosities between the German people and the West were largely overcome. The emergency had drawn the participants closer together and had revived European confidence in the commitment of the United States to the preservation of the political systems of Western Europe. The Berlin blockade had backfired on the Soviet Union.

There was reason for Western Europeans to gain confidence because of the American response to the challenge in Berlin and in the Mediterranean. In Greece the government had finally gained significant victories in the civil war (after Yugoslavia, in reaction to the rift with Stalin, had sealed off its borders, depriving the Greek rebels of supplies). But the threatening attitude of the Soviet Union, exemplified especially in the Czechoslovakian coup d'état and the Berlin blockade, raised the uncomfortable question of military defense. For Europe was not only confronted by the problems of economic weakness and political instability but it also was faced with alarming military weakness. The United States had insisted upon economic priorities. Indeed, the American government had kept its own military expenditures *below* the minimum level its military leaders thought necessary for national security. It was a "calculated risk," Defense Secretary Forrestal commented privately at the time, "to assist in European recovery."[11] But the crises of 1948 had convinced many in the United States and other capitals of the West that military considerations could be further ignored only at our peril. Discussions were begun that were to lead to a military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in which the United States, in a most significant departure from its traditional position of nonalliance, was to become the key member.

[11] Millis, *Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 350–51.

Chaos in China

During World War II, American strategy in Asia was devoted to the single purpose of defeating Japan. A considerable portion of Japan's military power was established on the Asian mainland in northern China, Manchuria, and Korea. Since World War I, the Nationalist government of China (the Kuomintang) had been engaged in a struggle to unify China. Until the Japanese intervention, the Nationalists had made considerable gains; but the powerful Japanese armies pushed the Nationalists out of the industrial areas into south and southwestern China. The Kuomintang had never been able to suppress the Communists. The latter, although also opposing the Japanese armies, continued the civil conflict against the central government.

At that time there were a number of competing American strategies for the defeat of Japan. Many military planners expected that American forces would ultimately have to fight the Japanese on the Asian mainland. Fearful of the length and cost of such a struggle, the American government urged the Nationalists to carry the war to the Japanese. They also eagerly accepted the suggestion that the Russians enter the war, because they expressed little apprehension or interest in postwar political settlements. China's military forces under Chiang Kai-shek suffered military defeats from which it would be difficult to recuperate, given the postwar struggle against the Communists that was later to take place. In the meantime, American successes against the Japanese island strongholds in the Pacific and the unexpected development of the atomic bomb accelerated the pace of American victories, ultimately leading to Japan's surrender without the anticipated American military campaign on the mainland.

Thus, at the war's end, the United States had not committed its ground forces to the war in China, while Russia, as was agreed at Yalta, entered the Pacific war at the last moment, occupying Manchuria and Korea. The Nationalists were suffering from attrition and low morale as a consequence of their setbacks during the war, but they were anxious to take control of the country from the defeated Japanese forces as rapidly as possible. The Nationalist armies were moved into Manchuria and northern China where they found their lines of communication and supply overextended and easily disrupted by Communist forces in the countryside. Without having the advantage of a sympathetic occupation force (the Russians had in

their nine months in Manchuria actively supplied the Communists while stripping Manchuria of its industries, leaving little for the Nationalists), the Kuomintang found it difficult to occupy the whole countryside. Instead, their armies seized the cities, in which they found themselves increasingly isolated.

By the end of 1946, the survival of the Nationalist regime was in serious doubt. Its armed forces, although provided with American military assistance, were overextended. The Nationalist government was sorely in need of reform if it was to carry out the social programs that might gain it domestic political support.

As the situation in China deteriorated into a full-scale civil war, the American government despaired of a solution; but it did not anticipate the swiftness with which the Communists were to succeed. Those in the United States who advocated increased American aid were rebuffed by the State Department, which interpreted the struggle in China as one of interminable length. "The Chinese government," Under Secretary of State Acheson declared in 1947, "is not in the position at the present time that the Greek government is in. It is not approaching collapse. It is not threatened by defeat by the Communists. The war with the Communists is going on much as it has for the last 20 years."[12]

The survival of the Nationalist armies depended in reality upon massive military assistance and quite probably, as General Albert C. Wedemeyer (who was assigned to report on the conditions in China) had argued in 1947, on a substantial commitment of American troops in China. But the United States government was unwilling to recognize the severity of the crisis in China and was unable to provide substantial military assistance without reversing its demobilization and low-level defense programs. Indeed, the United States was finding it difficult to maintain sufficient troops in the Far East to support its occupation responsibilities in Japan and South Korea. It was engaged in a costly program of economic aid in Europe and was understandably dismayed by the prospect of heavy commitments in China. In 1948, the Nationalist armies suffered severe defeats; by early 1949 their position became hopeless. In the autumn of 1949, the Nationalist government fled to Formosa. Mainland China came under the control of the Communists, who with surprising swiftness brought all of China under effective control.

Although the quick demise of the Kuomintang had not been

[12] U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Hearings on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947, p. 17.

anticipated by the American government, an even greater error in judgment was made in not interpreting the Communist victory as inimical to Western interests—as a few years later it so obviously became. The United States feared Russian influence in China more than the Chinese Communist regime itself. It expected the new Chinese government to exhibit the political ineffectiveness that had characterized the politics of China over previous decades. Because the United States was unable or unwilling to pay the heavy price of responsible action in 1945 and 1946 to influence the course of events in China in more favorable directions, it was, within a year after the fall of China, to pay a much heavier price for a much smaller piece of real estate: the war in Korea.

American Postwar Military Policies: Unification of the Armed Services

Against the perplexing array of postwar foreign crises, American military policies of the period appear in retrospect to have been peculiarly irrelevant. With hardly a thought for the consequences, the United States had plunged headlong into an incapacitating demobilization of its armed forces. From a peak of 12 million at the end of the war, the armed forces were reduced pell-mell to approximately one and a half million in less than two years. The public demand to "bring the boys home" was so great that very little concern could be given to maintaining minimal levels of combat effectiveness within key military units. Those who were retained months beyond their expectation were demoralized and petulant, while career personnel were equally dismayed by the effects of demobilization on military efficiency and esprit de corps. Although the remaining military force stood as the largest peacetime military establishment in American history, its numbers were an exaggeration of its real strength because it had been depleted of experienced and skilled manpower. Moreover, the military profession had not turned its full attention and expertise to a consideration of military policies related to the new challenges of world affairs. The armed services were locked in internecine conflict over the future administrative structure of the military establishment. Forrestal aptly described the struggle over unification of the armed forces as a "paralyzing row." Until it was settled

> . . . it would be impossible to lay down any long-range military plans or policies, to determine properly the size or structure of the military machine to be maintained, or to face with any consistency and fore-

thought the underlying politico-military problems which that machine existed to meet. It is hardly too much to say that the battle over unification . . . delayed the nation for a year or two in grappling with the already dire state of world affairs.[13]

In short, although the size of the military establishment was largely determined by nonmilitary considerations, the shape, missions, and compostion of the armed services and its administrative overhead were all subjects of bitter dispute.

The impetus to join the three services together into one unified force came from several sources. Originally, of course, the armed forces were divided along functional and elemental lines—an army for ground warfare and a navy for sea battles and global mobility. The addition of the air arm during World War I led to complications and service jealousies, and a long and acrimonious struggle for the creation of a separate air force. In 1941 the Air Corps was given a kind of de facto recognition of its equal status with the other two services, even though it remained a branch of the Army. In the drive among air partisans for a separate air force, the status of the naval air units was open to question: would the naval air arm remain part of the Navy or be absorbed by the new separate Air Force?

The drive for a new and separate branch of the armed services received additional impetus and increased rationale during World War II, a war in which air power became a revolutionary and salient feature of modern warfare. At the same time, however, other pressures were at work to create demands for a unification of the services. During the war, coordination of military units in specific areas was facilitated by the adoption of "unified commands" in which operational units of more than one service were placed under one commander. Overall unified policy was required almost immediately both in the pursuit of the war and for the purpose of negotiating and coordinating American military policies with those of the British. The American Joint Chiefs of Staff was specifically created as a counterpart to the existing British Chiefs of Staff Committee (together they were known as the Combined Chiefs of Staff). Because the British Chiefs of Staff included a Royal Air Force officer, the United States included an American counterpart.

Thus the worldwide character of World War II—requiring cooperative military operations among ground, sea, and air units in the vast theaters of warfare, and interallied cooperation that further en-

[13] Millis, *Forrestal Diaries*, p. 153.

couraged unified policies at the top of the military hierarchy—provoked renewed demands for both a separate air force and for unified armed forces.

At the close of the war there were but two alternatives: to create a single military department with three functional divisions—Army, Navy, and Air Force—under a single or Joint Chiefs of Staff system, or to establish a third military department, the Air Force, under a looser structure. The Army supported the first alternative, with Air Corps support, although the latter retained interest in the second alternative. The Navy opposed unification altogether, fearing that it would lose its air forces to the new functional Air Force and its Marine Corps to the Army. In a message to Congress in December 1945, President Truman went on record as favoring unified military forces according to the Army formula, calling for a single Secretary of the military department, a single Chief of Staff and three functional service branches within the establishment.[14] The Navy, alarmed by the implicit threat to its interests, was goaded into presenting a constructive alternative. It supported coordinating devices among three military services (to include an air force), but insisted upon three distinct services, three service secretaries, and the preservation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff system rather than a single Chief of Staff.

These were the lines along which the battle was drawn. Compromise was inevitable, resulting in the National Security Act of 1947. That legislation created three services (where there had been two) in loose confederation under a single Secretary of Defense but also retained separate service secretaries and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Congress also insisted upon defining the roles and missions of the armed forces with a view to protecting the Marines and Naval aviation from executive encroachment. Finally, there was included an overall coordinating agency, the National Security Council, a major contribution to the formalization of the strategy-making process at the highest echelons of civilian and military authority.

Thus for the first two years after the war, the military services were preoccupied with structural issues. The National Security Act resolved some aspects of the dispute, but differences remained. The Act was amended in 1949 to enhance the power of the Secretary of Defense. Although the main differences in the dispute concerned the shape and relationships of the armed services, there was also serious competition among the Army, Navy, and Air Force over significant

[14] U.S. Congress, House, Document No. 392, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945.

strategic issues—issues that had a direct bearing on the foreign and military policies of the United States. These issues were fought out along service lines and largely reflected the competing strategies of the three services during the war—the Army's concern for large-scale land warfare, the Navy's emphasis on the mobile characteristics of the naval aircraft carrier task force, and the Air Force's confidence in the efficacy of strategic bombardment and the "decisiveness" of air power.

Military Doctrines of the Armed Services

Before World War II, American military policy was based on the premise that security lay in isolation from the political struggles of Europe and on the military corollary that a major war, if it occurred, would be fought on the Eurasian continent rather than in the western hemisphere. Because the United States traditionally avoided political entanglements abroad, it was not likely that it would be involved at the outset of any hostile actions. The danger of involvement could thus be foreseen, giving the United States time to mobilize its resources. This concept meant that large standing armies were not necessary. Instead, the United States could rely upon a strong navy as the "first line of defense," serving to ward off penetration of the western hemisphere. In the event of danger, military plans called for the mobilization of citizen-soldiers and the tooling-up of industrial output for the war effort. It was assumed within the armed services that the United States would be required to fight overseas in the event of serious conflict; but because America was protected from imminent attack by its geographical position, there would be ample time to mobilize its forces and commit them to the battle. This meant, by implication, that the armed services needed to think ultimately in terms of *foreign* wars, rather than in terms of wars being carried to the United States itself. It also implied that the military policies of the United States were not to be devoted to the deterrence of war (a strategy that requires standing military forces), but were aimed only at fighting wars effectively after it became evident that American interests were threatened by military actions far removed from the American continent.

After World War II, some strategists began to argue that a war might come with little or no warning and that an attack was as likely to be launched against the United States as it was against American interests abroad. Where prewar strategy had been based on an ex-

pectation of warning and time for preparation, postwar strategy began to presume the possibility of surprise attack. Postwar military policies were thus beginning to face a different requirement—deterrence of attack by maintaining active military strength. These contrasting postures have been characterized as "mobilization strategy" (the prewar concept) and "deterrent strategy" (the postwar concept).[15] The old mobilization strategy did not call for substantial military forces until they were needed; the new deterrent strategy required existing military strength, both to prevent the outbreak of hostilities and to meet the possibility that war might come with such destructive suddenness that mobilization would be impossible.

The demobilization program started in 1945 did not, of course, reflect the new strategy of deterrence. Instead, it represented a return to prewar assumptions. Yet the seeds for a new strategy had been planted by a war that, for the United States, began with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and ended with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The new strategy was nurtured by a reassessment of America's political responsibilities in the light of the ominous challenges of Soviet policies, and it flowered with the American acceptance of political leadership and military responsibility for the Western nations during the Cold War.

Unfortunately, after World War II the foreign and military policies of the United States were moving in opposite directions. The rapid weakening of American military strength through demobilization did not reflect the gloomy assessment of Soviet intentions that led President Truman to adopt a new policy of firmness. It was exceedingly difficult for American policy-makers to harden their policies toward the Soviet Union when they fully realized that they were speaking from a position of extreme weakness. Indeed, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, who had expressed alarm at proposed reductions in American forces in Europe, believing in Theodore Roosevelt's maxim about speaking softly and carrying a big stick, ". . . thought it wise not to voice publicly [his] concern when we had only a twig with which to defend ourselves," until General Dwight D. Eisenhower had assured him, in February 1946, that the reorganization of the Army was progressing satisfactorily.[16]

In light of the disturbing course of world events and of the concern of key leaders in the Administration for the adequacy of Amer-

[15] Huntington, *The Common Defense*, pp. 26–27.

[16] James F. Byrnes, *All in One Lifetime* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 349.

ican military power during the demobilization program, it is surprising to note the irrelevancy of the concepts of major military policy being promoted within the military establishment at the time. The Army threw its support behind a program of universal military training (UMT) to provide a reserve of manpower for a small professional army, despite the evident need for a large number of troops to meet an ever-increasing variety of overseas crises and to fulfill growing American commitments abroad. The Air Force was committed to a strategic-bombardment doctrine to be implemented by a 70-group Air Force and an arsenal of atomic bombs, which was supposed to preclude the maintenance of large ground forces on the assumption that the "next war" would be decided through air power. The Navy expected to build its peacetime fleet around large, flush-deck aircraft carriers capable of handling atomic bombers—for the Navy, too, was eager to obtain an atomic bombardment mission.

All three services, in other words, promoted military doctrines that reflected their wartime experiences and their own interpretations of the nature of future warfare. All assumed that large standing armies were proscribed from serious consideration, but it was precisely the United States' weakness in conventional armed strength to cope with its occupation responsibilities in Germany, Trieste, Austria, Japan, and Korea, and with the recurrent crises of the time (in Iran, Turkey, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Berlin, China, Korea, and Palestine), that led General Marshall to complain that "we were playing with fire while we had nothing with which to put it out."[17]

Because of the strict ceiling on the military budget, it was not in the interest of the Navy and Air Force to support a larger Army, considering that increased expenditures for the Army were likely to be at the expense of the other two services. The Army, on the other hand, had assumed that its prewar experience—that the public would tolerate only a skeletonized professional army—would be repeated. It therefore based its manpower hopes on a universal military training program that would provide a large pool of ready reserves. This approach, of course, was irrelevant to the manpower shortages which were already plaguing the Army.

Total War and the Atomic Bomb

Underlying the competing doctrines of the three military services was a facile identification of *war* with *total war*. Moreover, severe

[17] Millis, *Forrestal Diaries*, p. 373.

budgetary limitations under which the armed services were forced to operate led them to give primary concern to long-term preparations for a future world war rather than immediate effort to adapt themselves to the foreign policy problems then being encountered.

The Army was convinced that the universal military training program then being advanced would have a dual effect. In the short run it would stimulate recruitment in the regular Army and beef-up understrength active units—as well as add immediately to the reserve potential. Also, according to UMT's most ardent and influential advocate, General Marshall, it would give "clear evidence to the world that we did not propose to abdicate our responsibilities in Europe or anywhere else in combating the rising and spreading tide of Communism."[18] In the long run the Army hoped that universal military training would provide the degree of readiness necessary for the United States to fight a third world war. What the Army and General Marshall promoted was an updated version of the prewar strategy of mobilization. In the early years of the atomic age the Army had neither grasped the implications of atomic weapons in terms of the efficacy of a mobilization strategy nor fathomed the constructive role its forces might play in influencing the behavior of foreign powers. It had not yet recognized that a foreign policy based on containment required, among other things, substantial ground forces capable of fighting local wars.

The Army was burdened not only by great demands upon its small resources but also by widespread lack of public sympathy and understanding. Ground warfare was generally regarded as both old-fashioned and abhorrent. Americans thought that the new technology—in particular, strategic air power and atomic bombs—had ushered in an era of push-button warfare in which the foot-slogging infantryman was outmoded. Also, Americans wished to avoid direct man-to-man combat with the "Communist hordes." The atomic bomb was believed to be the American equivalent to the apparent manpower superiority of the Communist camp.

In these attitudes, reflected in public and Congressional confidence in air power, we can detect the underlying support for a policy of nuclear deterrence, support which has its roots in American historical experience. W. W. Rostow has aptly characterized this sentiment as a "new air romanticism":

> Air power romanticism was a natural successor to the naval romanticism which had sprung up a half-century or so earlier; its advocates were in the direct line of the Mahanist proponents of the big navy of the first

[18] Ibid., p. 377.

decade of the century. A preponderant Strategic Air Command—like the Great White Fleet—appeared a device for performing as a world power without getting too deeply enmeshed in the complex, dangerous, interior affairs of Eurasia.[19]

Americans were disposed to think of air power as the decisive instrument of modern war, and air weaponry as a fitting manifestation of the industrial supremacy of the United States.

Competing Service Roles

The Air Force, of course, had first claim on the air mission of the military services. But the Navy also had a claim to air power and fought vigorously for a share of the strategic bombing program by advocating the construction of the prototype of a new class of aircraft carrier—an 80,000-ton flush-deck attack carrier able to accommodate atomic bombers. The Air Force, for its part, was committed to a goal of seventy groups as the minimum force necessary to fulfill its military responsibilities. Air Force and Navy goals were bound to clash with regard to general air power strategy and to lead to budgetary competition over the funding of their respective weapons programs.

In spite of the political tensions of 1947, the Administration retained its basic priorities. Given the competing demands for funds and the definite economic limits President Truman had accepted (based on the assumption that the American economy would be affected adversely by large federal spending programs), the Administration decided that the United States could not afford to provide both an enormous economic aid program to its allies and to expand its military forces. On January 12, 1948, President Truman reaffirmed this policy, giving economic aid first priority and leaving the military services to subsist on a budget of $11 billion, almost equally divided among the three branches. It was, to say the least, a starvation diet for the military establishment.

Three approaches to military policy had, then, aligned the services in competition with each other by 1948: (1) Universal Military Training, an Army program that had very little public support and only nominal endorsement of the Navy and Air Force but was actively promoted by Marshall and Truman; (2) a 70-group Air Force that had wide public support but only nominal acceptance by

[19] W. W. Rostow, *The United States in the World Arena* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 223–24.

the Administration; and (3) the Navy supercarrier program, about which air-power enthusiasts were divided and no critical decision had yet been made.

The National Security Act of 1947 had not accomplished the unification of the military establishment. Indeed, operating under severe budgetary restrictions, the three services became increasingly embittered. James Forrestal, the new Secretary of Defense, called a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in March 1948 at Key West, Florida, away from day-to-day pressures of Washington, in an attempt to establish basic agreements concerning the roles and missions of each branch of the armed forces. Although the meeting took place shortly after the shocking coup d'état in Czechoslovakia, it was confined essentially to discussions of interservice relations because the President had not yet committed the Administration to new courses of action. The Chiefs, according to Forrestal's account, agreed to a general statement of service functions, and the Air Force conceded a legitimate air role to the Navy, including the use of atomic weapons. They agreed that the Navy could proceed with the development of the supercarrier program (whether or not this decision constituted an endorsement by the Joint Chiefs of Staff remains a point of contention).[20]

In light of worsening relations with the Soviet Union and the demise of democratic government in Czechoslovakia, it was generally expected that the President would propose an expansion of the armed forces. The Air Force had the best advertised program. In the first months of 1948, reports by the President's Air Policy Commission (the Finletter Report) and the Congressional Aviation Policy Board (the Brewster Committee) strongly endorsed the 70-group Air Force.

The "Balanced Forces" Concept

However, the President chose a different course of action and one consistent with his own views. On March 17, 1948, President Truman addressed Congress. His forceful message identified the Soviet Union as the "one nation" that stood as a threat to peace and he called for prompt passage of the Marshall Plan, Universal Military Training, and a "temporary" reenactment of the Selective Service. Although widely interpreted as a call to rearmament, the President's recommendations were actually limited to actions designed to bring

[20] Millis, *Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 392–94.

the armed services up to strength. UMT, if enacted, would have added materially to the reserves, but that, at best, would have brought about a very slow accretion in military power.

Congressional reaction was favorable. Although Selective Service and the Marshall Plan were legislated, the Air Force program was so much more popular than UMT that Congress endorsed the 70-group program while rejecting Universal Military Training. Congressional preference for air power as the major element of American defense contradicted the Defense Department's recommendation that the military policies of the United States proceed on the basis of the "balanced forces" concept—a policy that, so far as it had any explicit meaning at all, meant that all three services had legitimate missions in any future general war, as opposed to a preponderant emphasis on any single service. Yet the attractiveness of the air power solution forced the Army and Navy into more explicit opposition to the Air Force, especially in the competition for appropriations. In the light of the Administration's decision in 1948 to place a $15 billion limit on defense spending, judging this to be the maximum that the nation's economy could stand, the competing programs of the three services were bound to clash. But at that time the hard decisions had not been made. The Army did not get UMT but it did get the draft; the Navy did not yet dare to challenge the Air Force strategic doctrine directly but succeeded in getting funds appropriated for first year construction costs on its flush-deck carrier; and the Air Force received the first part of a five-year, 70-group program (that the President announced would "not be spent" without his approval). Difficulties were bound to arise soon, however, because these combined programs, if fully implemented, would quickly raise defense spending above the budget ceiling.

Defense Secretary Forrestal, anxious to explore these implications with the President, found that Mr. Truman remained committed to the budgetary restrictions:

> [The President] . . . pointed out that the very people in Congress who would now vote for heavy Air appropriations are those who a year from now would deny anything to the Armed Forces, and that if we permit the military budget to rise to proportions that cut too deeply into the civilian economy, the ones that will suffer in the long run will be the Armed Services. That, he said, is precisely what he is trying to avoid. . . .[21]

However, a misunderstanding had arisen between the President and his Secretary of Defense over the extent to which the Administration

[21] Ibid., p. 432.

was committed to rearmament. The divergence of view led ultimately to Forrestal's resignation in early 1949. He was replaced by Lewis A. Johnson, a man fully and vigorously persuaded of the necessity for a restrictive defense budget. Johnson arrived on the scene at the moment when the really hard decisions had to be made if the President's budget ceiling was to be maintained.

Navy–Air Force Dispute

By this time the feud between the Air Force and Navy over strategic air power had reached a new and bitter stage. If the Navy was to retain a persuasive claim for a share in the strategic bombardment role, which the Air Force now explicitly sought to make its own monopoly, a Navy weapons system—in this case, the flush-deck carrier—had to be developed, and quickly. The Air Force had developed an intercontinental bomber, the B–36 (maximum range, 10,000 miles), and was anxious to accelerate production. Although serious questions had been raised about the performance of the B–36, Secretary Johnson was disposed to accept the Air Force arguments and reject those of the Navy. From his point of view the Navy was attempting to duplicate the functions assigned to the Air Force, a view confirmed by the Army and Air Force Chiefs of Staff. On April 23, 1949, the Secretary of Defense, with the President's approval, abruptly cancelled the construction of the U.S.S. *United States,* the Navy's vaunted supercarrier. The Secretary of the Navy quickly dispatched an irate letter of resignation to Johnson challenging the wisdom and manner of his decision against the Navy carrier.

The Navy-Air Force feud was ultimately to be forced into the open arena of congressional investigation. There the Navy vigorously challenged the Air Force doctrine of strategic bombing and sought to discredit the efficacy of the B–36 long-range bomber.[22] The Navy did not overturn the decision to cancel the supercarrier. Indeed, its image was damaged because in certain respects the "Admiral's Revolt" was unseemly and petulant. Yet the Navy did succeed in undermining the uncritical disposition of Congress with regard to the

[22] See, U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *Investigation of the B–36 Bomber Program,* 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1949; and U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *The National Defense Program: Unification and Strategy,* 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1949. A full account of this dispute is provided by Paul Y. Hammond, "Super Carriers and B–36 Bombers: Appropriations, Strategy and Politics," in Harold Stein (ed.), *American Civil-Military Decisions* (Birmingham: The University of Alabama Press, 1962), pp. 465–567.

70-group Air Force program. And the problems raised by the Air Force doctrine of strategic bombardment were given needed, if not sufficient, airing.

The Premise of Global War

Although each of the three military services differed in its approach to war planning, all agreed upon one basic premise: forces and armaments should be designed to cope with a third world war. The Air Force was convinced that in a future war strategic atomic bombing would prove to be the decisive instrument. The Navy partially demurred, arguing that control of the seas would also be necessary and that the most effective way of carrying the war to the enemy would be through the utilization of mobile aircraft carrier forces and naval atomic air power. The Army, the least influenced by the introduction of atomic weapons, remained convinced that the ultimate decisions in warfare still depended upon the capacity to meet and defeat the enemy's armies and to invade and occupy his territory.

But these were years in which American military strength was marginal. Severe budget limitations meant that the services were in reality looking to the future rather than to the present. For the moment the most salient feature of American military power was its atomic monopoly. The deterrent function of this unique American asset had neither been fully appreciated nor had there been many explicit attempts to exploit the weapon in the context of specific international crises. A most significant event did occur, however, in the summer of 1948 at the height of the Berlin blockade crisis when the United States dispatched B–29 atomic bombers to bases in Britain and West Germany ". . . bringing the nuclear weapons for the first time directly into the system of diplomacy and violence by which the affairs of peoples were thenceforth to be regulated."[23] The crisis was, of course, met by measures other than force. The bombers served no major role in the dispute, but the sending of atomic bombs to Europe in 1948 marked the first explicit, if hesitant, step in the direction of a more conscious development of nuclear deterrence as an aspect of American foreign policy.

[23] Walter Millis, *Arms and Men* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1956), p. 323.

CHAPTER 4

A Two-Power Nuclear World

The Genesis of Nuclear Deterrence

America's atomic monopoly came to an end in the autumn of 1949 with the detonation of an atomic device by the Soviet Union. The Russian achievement came sooner by a number of years than Americans, including most top government leaders, had been led to expect. For the United States the atomic monopoly had served as an ultimate assurance of American security. It also symbolized American technological supremacy. The surprisingly rapid development of atomic capabilities by the Soviet Union proved shocking to those in the West who had accepted uncritically the judgment that war damage and the primitive stage of Russian technological development placed the Soviet Union far behind the United States. In spite of this demonstration of Soviet scientific progress, the West was to underestimate consistently Russia's capacity to keep pace with the technological advancement of the United States.

During the period of the atomic monopoly, the Bomb stood as the "equalizer" for the defense of the West. The United States had failed to maintain its conventional military strength, and the nations of Western Europe were in no condition to support large armies of their own. In the judgment of some military experts, the only thing that stood between the powerful armies of the Soviet Union and the English Channel was the risk that such a move would provoke an American atomic attack upon Russia. This assumption remains speculative at best, for there is no firm evidence that the Soviet Union intended to conquer Western Europe by force of arms. Yet the deterrent function of America's air-atomic strength must have played a role both in enforcing caution and restraint upon the Soviet government and in establishing a degree of confidence and security among the nations situated west of the Red armies.

The United States failed to be explicit about its atomic strategy in the early years after World War II. Indeed, with a few notable exceptions, Americans failed to appreciate the deterrent potential of nuclear weapons at that time. It was generally assumed that atomic bombs inherently favored an aggressor because such destructive wea-

pons were presumed to be an advantage in surprise attack, and because there was no sure means of defense against them. The United States was traditionally and presumably unalterably opposed to initiating war, but many were inclined to believe that once the atomic secrets were obtained by an aggressor nation it would gain an inherent advantage that would be difficult, if not impossible, to counteract. The United States government's first impulse, therefore, was to banish atomic weapons from the arsenals of all nations by placing the control over atomic power under an international authority. That movement failed, and the United States then moved almost automatically to rely on the atomic bomb as the foundation of its military policy.

It would be an exaggeration, however, to claim that the United States adopted an explicit policy of nuclear deterrence before 1949. The fact is that the United States did not have sufficient means to deliver an effective atomic attack on Russian targets during that period. From 1945 to 1952, the mainstay of America's strategic airpower was a World War II bomber, the B–29 (and its modified version, the B–50), that required overseas bases to launch an attack upon the Soviet Union. Even though there were several hundred bombers available for this mission, overseas facilities and base rights were scarce. Significantly (whether the Soviet Union knew it or not), American atomic bomb stockpiles were dangerously low. A report of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy states that "uncontradictory testimony" indicated that in 1947 "... our weapons position verged on the tragic. The United States then possessed so few [atomic] bombs . . . that we might have tempted fate if public statements even mentioned the importance of numbers in building an atomic deterrent to aggression."[1] When this evidence is weighed against two other relevant considerations—that the strength of the ground forces in Western Europe was then sharply inferior to that of the Communist forces and that Soviet air forces had sufficient means to bomb all overseas air bases that might be used by American B–29's—one must conclude that although the United States could have inflicted severe atomic damage upon Soviet targets, "in the meantime, the Red Army would have reached the Channel, and we might well have lost the bulk of our strategic bomber force, while using up our

[1] U.S. Congress, Senate, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, *Investigation into the United States Atomic Energy Commission*, Report No. 1169, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., October 13, 1949.

A-bomb stocks, without telling military effect."[2] In short, the nuclear deterrent of the time was a psychological shadow rather than a military substance.

An Emerging Alliance

By 1948 the nations of Western Europe were sorely aware of their military vulnerability. In March 1948, Britain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands formed an organization known as the Western European Union, based on the Treaty of Brussels, a fifty-year defensive alliance binding each of the members to aid any of the others in the event of an attack. The American government, concurrently, had come to the realization that economic aid to Europe would not be enough. The United States moved to associate itself with the European defense treaty by reconciling its support for the United Nations with its conviction that military assistance to Europe was, in the face of the Soviet threat, a necessity. This was accomplished through the "Vandenberg Resolution," a declaration of the United States Senate affirming that even though it was the policy of the United States to work through the United Nations to maintain international peace and security, it was, nevertheless, the intention of the Senate that this country should make ". . . clear its determination to exercise the right of individual and collective self-defense under Article 51 should any armed attack occur affecting its national security."[3]

Adopted on June 11, 1948, the Vandenberg Resolution cleared the way for the American government to draft a treaty in concert with the Brussels powers. The North Atlantic Treaty was signed on April 4, 1949, joining the United States, Canada, the five members of the Western European Union, plus Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Italy, and Portugal in an historic military alliance. The basic purpose of the treaty was to guarantee *in advance* America's commitment to aid Europe in the event of attack. In other words, it was a psychological measure designed to reassure Europe and warn the Soviet Union. No immediate arms build-up was intended at that time. As Robert Osgood noted:

[2] James E. King, Jr., "NATO: Genesis, Progress, Problems," in Gordon B. Turner and Richard D. Challener (eds.), *National Security in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), pp. 150–51.

[3] *Department of State Bulletin*, XIX (July 11, 1948), p. 79.

> . . . NATO was not created to marshall military power, either in being or in potential, in order to deter an imminent attack on Europe. Like Russia's huge army, it was intended to provide the political and psychological reinforcement in the continuing political warfare of the cold war.[4]

That is, in so far as the North Atlantic Treaty served as a deterrent it rested on the guarantee of American involvement (and by implication American atomic bombs), and not on a specific plan for rearmament in Western Europe. The latter was to come only after the alarms generated by the Korean War.

Thus, from 1945 through 1949, the entire period of the American atomic monopoly, the United States relied almost unconsciously on the unique psychological advantage that accrued from its sole possession of nuclear weapons, but at the same time failed to establish an explicit doctrine of nuclear deterrence. Indeed, the government was unsure about the strategic value of the atomic bomb, and the military services were sharply divided over the specific value of atomic weapons in warfare.

Early Notions of Deterrence

During the period of America's atomic monopoly there was an undercurrent of thought about the political and military implications of nuclear power. Most of the scientific, intellectual, and defense communities assumed that the atomic bomb inherently favored the aggressor; however, others recognized its deterrent potential. Jacob Viner, in a pioneering essay on this subject published in January 1946, saw that atomic weapons might make nations ". . . determined to avoid war even where in the absence of the atomic bomb they would regard it as the only possible procedure . . . for resolving a dispute . . . ."[5] He further stated that

> . . . in a war between two fairly equally matched states possessed of atomic bombs each side would refrain from using the bombs at the start; each side would decide that it had nothing to gain and a great deal to lose from reciprocal use of the bombs, and that unilateral use was not attainable.[6]

In short, Viner recognized immediately the forces for caution and

[4] Robert E. Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 30.

[5] Jacob Viner, "The Implications of the Atomic Bomb for International Relations," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, XC (January, 1946), p. 55.

[6] Ibid., p. 54.

restraint that might be a consequence of a two-power nuclear world.

Bernard Brodie argued along similar lines in a book published in 1946. He asserted that the deterrent effects of atomic weapons, given the probable absence of firm international controls against their use, ought to be exploited by the United States. If and when atomic capabilities spread to other countries, Brodie urged that all possible steps, unilateral and multilateral, be taken ". . . to make as nearly certain as possible that the aggressor who uses the bomb will have it used against him. If such arrangements are made, the bomb cannot but prove in the net a powerful inhibition to aggression."[7]

Brodie and Viner were in a minority in arguing that the loss of America's atomic monopoly, which they believed to be inevitable, would not necessarily constitute a major setback if the United States undertook steps to develop a strategy of nuclear deterrence. Their contributions to strategic thought marked the beginning of a significant effort by a group of intellectuals, the so-called academic strategists, whose concerted and systematic application of research and theory on military strategy encouraged a more sophisticated development of deterrent strategies in the United States. Even so, during the period of atomic monopoly American military and political leaders failed to promulgate strategic doctrines that would integrate atomic on the retaliatory power of atomic bombers without considering the weapons into a coherent national strategy. They unconsciously relied full implications involved in using that power. The military services were more concerned with the way a third world war might be fought than with developing a political strategy that might be used to prevent a war from occurring in the first place. In other words, deterrence had yet to become a significant feature of American foreign and military policy.

NSC–68: Program for Rearmament

The conflict among the military services about the nature of the war for which they were to prepare, the weapons that they would need, and the disagreement within the Administration as to what was the approach appropriate to overall military policy reached near-crisis proportions in the autumn of 1949. By that time several issues

[7] Bernard Brodie, "The Atomic Bomb and National Security," in Bernard Brodie (ed.), *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), p. 75.

had become painfully clear: (1) the Chinese Communists had thoroughly defeated the Nationalist forces and controlled all of mainland China; (2) the Soviet Union had achieved nuclear status; (3) a decision on whether the United States should produce a fusion (thermonuclear) bomb became a matter of extreme urgency as a result of the Russian atomic bomb; (4) the Navy–Air Force dispute over carriers and bombers had revealed significant inadequacies in American military strategy; and (5) the initial survey of European defense requirements that followed up the American commitment to North Atlantic Treaty Organization indicated that Western European defenses were alarmingly inadequate and beyond the immediate remedial action of the Europeans themselves.

The convergence of these problems brought key participants within the Truman Administration to urge a reassessment of American military and foreign policy. Initiative for reassessment came from the State Department, which keenly felt the pressure of adverse international events. This feeling was shared by the senior staff of the National Security Council. Sidney Souers, its Executive Secretary, and David E. Lilienthal, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, concluded that a general review of American national strategy was in order. Lilienthal maintained that the hydrogen bomb project should not proceed on a crash basis without a general consideration of the overall implications of our nuclear weapons program, which he believed the State and Defense Departments had neglected to think through. As a result, President Truman signed a directive, January 30, 1950, initiating the hydrogen bomb program, to which a letter was attached directing the Secretaries of State and Defense to undertake an overall review and assessment of American national security policies in view of the loss of China, the development of the atomic bomb by Russia, and the prospect of American thermonuclear weapons.[8]

As a result of the President's letter, the strategic survey was reassigned from the National Security Council to a joint State Department–Defense Department study group which produced, in the course of six weeks intensive effort, a sweeping policy document known ultimately as NSC (National Security Council) document 68. In

[8] Paul Y. Hammond, "NSC–68: Prologue to Rearmament," in Warner R. Schilling, *et al., Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 289–92. All information pertaining to NSC–68 is drawn from Hammond's authoritative and exhaustive account, ibid., pp. 271–378.

brief, this document set forth an interpretation of Soviet behavior, surveyed the policy alternatives available for the United States, compared U.S. and Soviet strengths and weaknesses, and concluded that under the circumstances the United States needed to begin a vigorous rearmament program. NSC–68 painted a disturbing picture of America's present and future position in the world vis-á-vis the Soviet Union. Russia had no master plan, it reasoned, but it aspired ultimately to world hegemony while preserving its own power base, consolidating its hold over the satellite states around it, and seeking to weaken all opposing power centers. Although the Soviet Union was beset by certain internal weaknesses—particularly by its agricultural system, the relationship of its leaders to the people, and the relationship between the Soviet Union and its satellites—the NSC–68 document predicted rapid Soviet economic growth, the maintenance of a large military establishment, and the production of sufficient atomic bombs and delivery capabilities to offset American nuclear deterrence within a period of four to five years.

By comparison the West had insufficient military power. NSC–68 stressed the need for conventional military capabilities, especially in view of the erosion of atomic deterrence. It did not foresee the possibility of a negotiated settlement with the Russians on any basis other than strength. This, it was argued, could come about only through the development of military power and political cohesion in the West. It concluded that the United States had no alternative but to rearm itself while helping its allies to do the same. It estimated that the United States could easily afford to spend as much as 20 percent of its gross national product on armaments without jeopardizing its economy. It pointed out the inherent dangers of America continuing on a course of limited defense budgets, while it rejected as folly, two competing alternatives: the withdrawal of our forces into a fortress America, on the one hand, and preventive war on the other. In short, NSC–68 called for the development of a systematic program for the improvement of Western strength and cohesion on the basis that the security of the entire free world was threatened by the growth of Soviet power.

NSC–68 was shaped by the persons most concerned with the external demands on American foreign and military policies. It represented an analysis of international problems rather than a set of specific proposals for their resolution. The Administration was caught between two conflicting worlds: the international, in which it recognized a growing threat to American security interests, and the do-

mestic, in which the pressures to pursue an austere program for the sake of the economy were most pronounced. President Truman had encouraged the strategic reassessment, but he did not endorse its findings. He wanted to know what it meant in concrete terms. In the meantime, the budgeteers retained the initiative. They proposed a military budget ceiling for fiscal year 1951 of $13 billion in spite of the implied requirement for greater expenditures contained in NSC–68. Plans for the fiscal 1952 budget suggested more severe limitations. The Administration was divided in its responses between the requisites of domestic and international politics. The President apparently was aware of these divergencies but was not yet in a position to choose between them. "Not choosing," as Hammond has observed, "meant staying on the economy track, which seemed to fit the President's disposition" at the time.[9]

The Korean War

If North Korea had not launched its attack across the 38th parallel (June 25, 1950), NSC–68 might merely have remained an instructive footnote in the history of American security policies. But because of the Korean War and America's response to it, NSC–68 provided a broad strategic framework for rearmament. It is clear that the domestic political climate of 1950 would have made a rearmament program an exceedingly difficult proposition in the absence of a specific international crisis. The Administration could have initiated a campaign to arouse public support for rearmament, but it would have had to contend with the prospect of an unbalanced budget. There was ample evidence that increased public expenditures were unpopular, and the Administration had no assurance that it could make a convincing case for the realism of its strategic reassessment. The Korean War resolved the issue, of course, by making national security the self-evident determinant of the defense budget. Expenditures soared quickly, jumping to $22 billion in fiscal year 1951, and peaking at $50 billion in fiscal year 1953. Moreover, the Administration almost immediately committed itself to the objectives set forth by NSC–68. Rather than choosing to respond narrowly to the war in Korea, the Administration decided to implement an overall rearmament program. President Truman stated this objective explicitly in an address to Congress in the summer of 1950: "The purpose of these proposed estimates is two-fold," he declared. "First, to meet the immediate situation in Korea, and second, to provide for an early,

[9] Ibid., p. 331.

but orderly, build-up of our military forces to a state of readiness designed to deter further acts of aggression."[10]

The attack on South Korea did not represent a failure in deterrence. American policies in the Far East had been in disarray throughout the postwar period primarily because the United States was unable to come to terms with the course of events in China. In spite of strong domestic political demands for more concrete aid to the Nationalist forces, the Administration was disposed to avoid deep involvement on the Asian mainland. It refused to interpret the Chinese civil war in the same strategic terms as the Greek civil war. It did not expect a swift Communist victory but, given the severe limitations and worldwide obligations already imposed upon scarce American military forces, it was disposed to "let the dust settle" in Asia rather than to undertake more vigorous policies.

In the eighteen months preceding the attack on South Korea, the United States began to define its commitment in Asia. It was primarily a peripheral commitment, describing an arc along the western Pacific littoral, from the Aleutians to Japan and down to the Philippines. Occupation responsibilities alone had placed a strain on scarce American ground forces in Europe and Asia.

In Korea, American and United Nations' efforts to unify the country politically were frustrated by the refusal of the Soviet Union to allow free, internationally supervised elections. The Russians had established a satellite government in the northern sector in the same pattern as those established in eastern Europe. North Korean troops were armed and trained by the occupation forces of the Soviet Union. The Russians withdrew their troops unilaterally in December 1948, calling for the United States to follow suit.

The United States had already decided, in accordance with the peripheral defense perimeter policy for the western Pacific, that early termination of its occupation responsibilities in Korea was required. In September 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended withdrawal of American troops in light of Korea's low strategic value and the severe shortage of military manpower.[11] By the summer of 1949, all American forces, with the exception of a small advisory mission, left South Korea.

Thus, with the end of the occupation in North and South Korea, the stage was set for the aggressive attack the following year. To the Communist powers, the United States appeared to be restricting its commitment in the Far East. America's China policy failed to pre-

[10] President Harry S. Truman, address to Congress, July 24, 1950.

[11] Truman, *Memoirs*, II, p. 325.

vent Communist victory on the mainland. The United States appeared to be preparing to dissociate itself from direct identification with the Formosan-based regime of Chiang Kai-shek. The State Department expected Formosa to fall in 1950 and was prepared to acquiesce, for the Administration was explicit about its reluctance to become involved in the Chinese civil war.

On January 12, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson publicly proclaimed American policy for the Far East. He described the "defense perimeter" in the western Pacific, to which the Joint Chiefs of Staff had concurred, as a line that "runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus" (Okinawa) and from there to the Philippines. For areas beyond that line, should an attack occur, ". . . the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations. . . ."[12]

Had Korea been written off? Presumably not, although it was explicitly beyond America's Far Eastern defense line. But the primary guarantee for South Korea's security was shifted to Korea itself and to the collective security principle of the United Nations Charter. The United States was preoccupied with what it felt was a Russian threat to initiate a third world war. The strategic value of the Korean peninsula in terms of that global perspective was obviously marginal. In this sense, an American deterrent to local aggression in Korea did not exist. Under these circumstances, the swiftness of the American response to the attack on South Korea was probably as much of a surprise to the Russians—who at that time obviously controlled the North Korean regime—as the attack itself was to the American government.

The war in Korea was not interpreted by the American government as a civil war between the two divided elements on a remote peninsula. It was not thought to be an isolated incident whose implications were limited to a strategically insignificant piece of real estate. The United States government perceived the event in terms of its global concerns. It marked an ominous change in Soviet tactics from political pressures and veiled military threats to the overt use of armed force to expand Soviet control, and it violated the fundamental principle of the United Nations Charter. Left unchallenged, this would encourage further aggressions. In short, it was viewed as a step in the direction of a new world war. As explained later by President Truman:

[12] *Department of State Bulletin*, XXII (January 23, 1950), p. 116.

Communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier. . . . If the Communists were permitted to force their way into the Republic of Korea without opposition from the free world, no small nation would have the courage to resist threats and aggression by stronger Communist neighbors. If this was allowed to go unchallenged it would mean a third world war, just as similar incidents had brought on the second world war.[13]

Rearming Europe

The American response to the Korean attack was undertaken to punish the aggressors in keeping with the collective security principle of the United Nations, but it was also a preventive measure—to preclude the development of political and military conditions that could lead to another world war. The latter reason was the most compelling. The Administration moved along two fronts: to undertake immediate although limited measures in Korea to meet and defeat the Communist probe without expanding the war, and to begin a general rearmament program that would deter further acts of aggression. In spite of the initial setbacks in Korea and the ultimate intervention by the armies of the Chinese Communists, events that provoked many voices to advocate an expansion of American aims and military commitments in the Far East, President Truman remained adamant about the policy priorities already established: "I had no intention of allowing our attention to be *diverted* from the unchanging aims and designs of Soviet policy," the President wrote later. "I knew that in our age, Europe, with its millions of skilled workmen, with its factories and transportation network, is still the key to world peace."[14]

America's allies in Western Europe were, of course, as alarmed by the implications of the outbreak of hostilities in Korea as was the United States. They feared that the Communist adventure in the Far East might also lead to military probes in Europe. They were particularly concerned that the attack in Korea might be a diversionary tactic intended to draw American attention and scarce military resources to Asia, making Europe more vulnerable to political pressures or armed attack.

The United States government was aware of Europe's fears and considered the hypothesis that the Korean attack was diversionary to be plausible. The Korean War almost immediately changed the character of the North Atlantic Treaty. The allies moved to integrate

[13] Truman, *Memoirs*, II, p. 333.
[14] Ibid., p. 380, (emphasis added).

further their defense plans, and the United States, for its part, completely reoriented its European defense position. It was now felt that military aid was insufficient in itself and that more concrete evidence of American concern and commitment was needed to overcome the fears triggered by the Korean War. On September 9, 1950, President Truman announced that the United States would make "substantial increases in the strength of United States forces to be stationed in Western Europe in the interest of the defense of that area."[15] Four divisions were added to two already committed to occupation duties to demonstrate the importance of America's commitment to Europe, to increase substantially NATO's defense capabilities, and to provide an example and an incentive for the other members of the alliance.

This was, of course, a remarkable move for the United States to undertake: first, because it was contrary to an unbroken tradition of nonentanglement in Europe during peacetime, and second, because the United States was seriously engaged in fighting a war on the other side of the globe. The Administration was able to accomplish this unprecedented change in American foreign policy because the Korean War threatened to undermine its Europe-first approach. The decision to send ground troops to Europe was facilitated by the American adherence the previous year to the North Atlantic Treaty that provided, in Article 3, that the members would "maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack." Integrated defensive arrangements were encouraged by the United States; however, it was clear that the Americans were not inclined to contribute ground forces until the Korean crisis made a deeper involvement by the United States practically mandatory. Because two American divisions were already in Europe performing occupation duties in Germany, the Administration was able to present its decision in terms of an "increase" in American ground forces to Europe. Yet many voices were raised in alarm, including that of former President Herbert Hoover, whose persuasive arguments precipitated a "great debate." Hoover advanced an alternative strategy more in keeping with traditional American diplomacy: a "fortress America," defended by its greatest assets, geography and superior technology—capabilities manifested in the atomic bomb and the long-range mobility of naval and air power. He and his supporters

[15] Statement appears in U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations and Committee on Armed Services, Joint Hearings on *Assignment of Ground Forces of the United States to Duty in the European Area,* 82d Cong., 1st Sess., 1951, p. 83.

contended that the United States was gravely mistaken to commit itself in advance to a ground war in Europe. They believed that strategic air power was the dominant arm and the only effective instrument of war.

But the Fortress America strategists were faced with a fait accompli. As Senator Robert A. Taft commented at the time, "my own view is we would be safer if we had no army in Europe . . . ," but recognizing our "responsibility as one of the occupying powers in Germany" he was reluctant to fight vigorously to overturn the Administration's decision.[16] The appointment of one of America's most popular and respected generals, Dwight D. Eisenhower, as the first supreme commander of the integrated NATO forces in Europe helped to overcome some criticism. His prestige served the Administration well, both by undermining domestic criticism and by reinforcing America's image in Europe of deep commitment to the continent's defense.

The Shifting Deterrent Equation

From 1945 to 1950, a balance of sorts existed between the American dual monopoly of atomic weapons and long-range air power and the preponderant Russian land forces. The armies of the Soviet Union were poised to overrun Western Europe, while American bombers stood ready to carry out an atomic attack upon Russian cities. Neither threat could deal directly with the other. A war between the two giants would predictably result in the destruction of Russian cities by the United States and the conquest of Western Europe by the Soviet Union. Each side had a bargaining point: the United States threatened to punish the Soviet Union severely if it attacked Western Europe; and the Russians, for their part, threatened to deprive the United States of the strategic prize—Europe—if the U.S. attacked the Russian homeland. This was a precarious stalemate at best. But it *was* a stalemate.

The development of Soviet atomic capabilities immediately began to affect the deterrent balance. American long-range air power was still sufficiently superior to check any rash moves by Soviet leaders, especially with her access to air bases in England and on the continent. But with the growth of Russian air-atomic potential, the end of the balance (Western Europe for Russian cities) was in sight.

[16] Ibid., p. 617.

As soon as American bombers and American cities became vulnerable to Soviet atomic attack, the balance of military power was likely to tip dangerously in the direction of Russia.

Developing an Explicit Deterrent Policy

NSC–68 had anticipated this process and implied that it could be countered only by the development of substantial American and allied forces-in-being, including sufficient conventional ground strength to counter Russian land power in Europe. The outbreak of warfare in Korea made rearmament along these lines feasible. The Truman Administration moved to define its new strategic doctrine. Although it did not have to coin a phrase, it might have chosen "balanced deterrence" to complement its earlier rationale of "balanced forces."

As outlined by Secretary of State Acheson,[17] the United States pursued three major military goals: to prevent war, to prevent the Soviet Union from achieving its aggressive objectives by means other than war, and to insure victory if war came. But the principal objective of the United States was to develop an effective deterrent: "Our primary concern," said Acheson, "is not how to win a war after it gets started, but how to prevent it. . . ." He believed that there were but three basic deterrent factors: retaliatory air-atomic power, reserve potential, and ground forces in being (especially the integrated forces for NATO). It was this third factor that the Truman Administration believed to be most significant, with America's loss of atomic monopoly. However, this was the factor that was most controversial. Acheson argued that reliance on air power alone would leave allies abroad helpless:

> One reason we cannot continue to rely on retaliatory air power as a sufficient deterrent is the effect of time. We have a substantial lead in air power and atomic weapons. At the present moment [1951] this may be the most powerful deterrent against aggression. But with the passage of time, even though we continue our advances in this field, the value of our lead diminishes.
>
> In other words, the best use we can make of our present advantage in retaliatory air power, is to move ahead under this protective shield to build the balanced collective forces in Western Europe that will continue to deter aggression after our atomic advantage has been diminished.

The United States rearmament program gained momentum during the first year of the Korean War. The sudden increase in defense

[17] Acheson's remarks are drawn from *Hearings on the Assignment of U.S. Ground Forces to Europe*, pp. 78 ff.

expenditures accelerated a host of military programs from the hydrogen bomb to conventional strength in Europe. There were a number of obstacles, technical and political, in all areas of the military program. But during the period of intensely felt danger, from the attack on South Korea in June 1950 until the United Nations forces recovered from the losses sustained during the initial period of the Chinese intervention in the war, the Administration was able to maintain its policy. Perhaps most significant of all, the Administration was moved by the events to define its overall military policy objectives more clearly and to include in its plans not only the prospect of global war but also the more immediate problem of limited, local engagements on the Korean scale. Although many analysts of the period noted correctly that the national strategic outlook was based on the necessity for "containment" of Communism, few noted what had become, by 1951, its most salient feature: an explicit policy of deterrence to be implemented by forces in Europe that could prevent the Soviets from achieving an easy military conquest on the Continent, combined with beefed-up strategic retaliatory force that could inflict a punishment on the Russians that would clearly outweigh any anticipated advantage gained by military aggression.

Resurrecting Conventional Forces

This, indeed, was the implication of Acheson's remarks during his defense of the Administration's decision to send troops to Europe. Under the shield of the atomic deterrent, the United States proposed to move quickly to build up the collective ground strength in Europe deemed necessary to provide adequate conventional defense against the Communist armies to the East. The military preparations that the United States government urged upon its own people and the countries of Western Europe were for the purpose of deterring war. Acheson argued, in effect, that the best way to prevent war was to develop the capacity to deal an adversary a sharp and damaging blow. Because one country could no longer rely upon atomic bombs to impose a convincing threat, substantial conventional power had to be resurrected. Therefore, American forces were sent to Europe to inspire European military cooperation and self-confidence.

However, the sensed danger of war was beginning to decline by the end of 1951. The battle in Korea remained limited and was moving towards stalemate. In Europe an effort to establish force goals to match the Communist armies in the field was accomplished

at Lisbon in February 1952. But in December the North Atlantic Council drastically reduced those goals. Time was running out on the Truman Administration. Nineteen fifty-two was an election year. There was no time to reformulate overall American strategy and sell it to the American people and the allies. Indeed, the Administration itself had lost some of its earlier enthusiasm for an accelerated rearmament program. As international tensions subsided and domestic politics reemerged as a primary consideration, stretch-outs in force goals were ordered. Nevertheless, the Administration's general commitment to the establishment of a position of strength for the West and an improved defense posture for the United States was set. With no time to carry out his program, President Truman ordered the preparation of a policy paper to alert the next Administration to the problems imposed by international conditions and to advise it of the appropriate solutions. This document, in effect a revision of NSC–68 and designated NSC–141,[18] called for larger defense expenditures, particularly for air defense, and stressed the growing importance of the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia to American national security. However, the new Republican Administration, which was committed to the reformulation of American national strategy that the Truman Administration never had time to undertake in full, was inclined to reject the document and to begin anew on its own.

Strategic Air Power: An Arms Race?

Since the end of World War II, the United States had maintained a dominant advantage in strategic air power. Initially, the Soviet Union deprecated the significance of strategic bombing in warfare. The Russians, after all, did not yet have the atomic bomb. Moreover, their military experience had been largely limited to major land warfare. Their military doctrine was conditioned by that experience and became rigid under Joseph Stalin, whose tenacious control over the Soviet government left little room for new ideas. Stalin had decreed that the outcome of war was determined by "permanent operating factors" and that, in effect, because war was basically a clash between social systems, the superior system (under his superior leadership) would win out against any inferior system. Any "transitory factors," such as surprise attack and strategic bombing, might affect the course

[18] For details, see Hammond, "NSC–68: Prologue to Rearmament," pp. 359 ff.

of the war somewhat, but not its final outcome. No one dared challenge Stalin's doctrines during his lifetime. After his death in 1953, however, a significant reappraisal of Soviet military strategy followed.

Although Stalin's leadership inhibited the development of military thought appropriate to the nuclear age, progress in science and technology was apparently given rather a free rein. Great emphasis was placed on technological advancement in the vital fields of atomic research, rocketry, jet engines, and aviation technology. The results were to startle the Western world again and again: the Soviets demonstrated that they were quite capable of keeping pace with the West in science and of exceeding the West in certain critical areas. Thus, during the period of the atomic monopoly, when the United States was confident—even complacent—about its scientific and technological supremacy, the Soviet Union was engaged in an intensive effort to catch up and surpass the West. The United States was not fully aware until 1949, when the Russians first exploded their atomic bomb, that it was engaged in a technological arms race—one that would gravely affect the balance of military power. Not until 1957, when the Soviets orbited the world's first artificial satellite, did the American people fully comprehend the gravity of the Russian challenge.

Two aspects of the U.S.–Soviet arms race were especially relevant to the strategy of nuclear deterrence: aviation and nuclear weapons technology. In both fields, the United States began with an enormous lead. The Russians, of course, did not have an atomic bomb until 1949. In the meantime, their long-range air force was inferior in quality and quantity to America's. Nevertheless, while the United States relied on its World War II inventory of bombers and fighters, the Soviet Union pushed ahead quickly in the development and production of piston and jet engine aircraft. The Soviet Union copied and produced a replica of the mainstay bomber of the American Strategic Air Command, the B–29 (designated the Tu–4), but that aircraft was insufficient in range to constitute a threat to the United States with the exception of suicidal one-way missions that would have made little sense before the Russians had an atomic bomb.

As late as 1947 the United States did not have a truly intercontinental bomber either. The B–29 was supplemented by an improved version, the B–50. But the United States had an advantage over the USSR in that it had at least limited access to overseas bases from which these bombers could reach Russian targets. During the Berlin blockade, the value of overseas bases was underscored by the de-

cision to establish an American atomic base in England as a threat to Soviet aggression. But the United States did not want to rely on strategic bomber bases that were vulnerable to Soviet air attack or that could be overrun by advancing ground forces. In 1948, therefore, the Air Force began limited production of a piston-engine giant, the B–36, an aircraft that had an effective range of 10,000 miles, bringing all Soviet targets within striking distance of bases in the United States—bases that were beyond the reach of the Russian air force.

Air power enthusiasts of that period were urging the United States to develop the capacity to defend itself from "fortress America," but the experience in the Korean conflict demonstrated what critics of the B–36 had claimed since 1948—that piston-engine bombers were extremely vulnerable to Soviet jet interceptors. In spite of the evident need to replace the B–36 with a jet counterpart—an intercontinental jet bomber—the United States was forced to turn instead to the best available jet bomber, the medium-range B–47, that was mass produced and dispersed among a number of strategic bomber bases on the periphery of Europe and Asia. Thus, as the United States moved into the period of the mid-1950's, its strategic air power was growing in performance potential. In time more than 1,500 B–47's were produced. In the meantime, more than 300 B–36 bombers entered Air Force inventories.[19] Ultimately the United States replaced the obsolete intercontinental B–36 with an all-jet counterpart, the B–52. But throughout the period of strategic air strength, the United States relied on bombers based abroad, supplemented by long-range bombers stationed in the United States. Fortress America did not become a realistic strategic and technological option until the advent of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Although the Soviet Union lagged behind the United States in long-range strategic air power, it did not in the technology of jet engine development and nuclear weapons. Although they were four years behind the United States in achieving atomic status, the Soviets exploded a fusion device (hydrogen bomb) in 1953 within months of the first American explosion. Moreover, in 1954, the Soviets began to show evidence of new jet bomber types. They began producing a twin-jet "Badger" bomber somewhat equivalent in range and performance to the B–47, and in the following two years, added two intercontinental range bombers (the large, turbo-prop "Bear" and

[19] William Green and John Fricker, *The Air Forces of the World,* (New York: Hanover House, 1958), pp. 302–305.

the all-jet "Bison" bombers) to their strategic inventory. The United States, therefore, remained apprehensive in case its strategic air supremacy be challenged by the Soviet Union. Indeed, by 1956, there were dire predictions that unless production of the B–52 was accelerated, the Soviet Union would enjoy ". . . a numerical advantage in long-range bombers in the period 1958–60."[20] Although subsequent events revealed that the Soviet Union—whether for reasons of technology, economics, politics, or military doctrine—did not produce many long-range bombers, the point remains that in the 1950's, the United States became increasingly apprehensive about the possibility of a surprise Soviet nuclear air attack, one that might neutralize American strategic forces and blunt the retaliatory threat.

The Eisenhower Administration

The Korean War created those emergency conditions that caused great and sudden changes in national policy. Some thought had gone into the formulation of general policy goals, largely as a result of the reassessment process that culminated in the NSC–68 policy paper. However, practically no attention was given to the mundane question of the long-term political acceptability of new and expensive military programs. Once the crisis passed, how was the government going to maintain support for a rearmament policy that pre-Korean War attitudes apparently prohibited?

The Korean War, after all, thrust aside economizing forces but certainly did not eliminate them. The Truman Administration set the nation on a new course, one for which there was insufficient public rationale provided. The Korean crisis stood as evidence of the danger and the need for response. But given the disagreeable results of the war and the relaxation of tensions that came with the stalemated war, further support for policies that were stimulated by the war could be achieved only through a vigorous campaign by the Administration to explain the continued need. But the Truman Administration was first engulfed by the crisis in Korea and then by a national election campaign. Before it was able to present a rationale for its policies, it found itself on the defensive, responding to the key Republican campaign charges of "Communism," "corruption," and "Korea." The Republican Party took good advantage of growing

[20] U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on the Air Force of the Committee on Armed Services, *Study of Airpower*, 84th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 105 (testimony of General Curtis E. LeMay, Commander of the Strategic Air Command).

popular disaffections with the politics and policies of the Democrats. General Eisenhower returned from his command at NATO headquarters to accept the Republican nomination and led his party to victory in November 1952. Having lost the election, the Democrats left to the new Administration the task of formulating acceptable national security policies for a nation once more tired and frustrated by the exigencies of international politics.

The Republican leaders viewed with suspicion the political legacies inherited from the Democrats. They were bound to take a new and critical look at all aspects of the public policies they had roundly criticized. The new Administration was committed, from the outset, to a program of economic retrenchment. One of the most salient features of the campaign was the charge of reckless Federal expenditures and unbalanced budgets. The national security policies of the Eisenhower Administration were to be "balanced" against the needs of a healthy, free economic system. The President and his advisers were, indeed, convinced that the nation's first line of defense lay in a sound, healthy economy. From their point of view—and it was undoubtedly a popular one—"the central problem was seen as the reconciliation of 'security' with 'solvency.'"[21] This was, of course, the same perspective that the Truman Administration had held until the outbreak of the Korean War.

The Helena Conference

The general objectives of the Eisenhower Administration were set forth at a conference of top leaders aboard the cruiser "Helena" in December 1952, following the General's dramatic post-election trip to Korea. The two great problems that confronted these leaders were, by their definition, economic policy and national security. In the economic sphere they hoped to eliminate waste and unnecessary government operations and to balance the budget; in the defense sphere they wanted to try to terminate the war in Korea immediately and undertake a thorough examination of the military establishment, hopefully to accomplish great savings. As General Eisenhower remarked, rapid technological changes required a reshaping of forces, weapons, and strategies for what he called the "long haul."[22]

[21] Glenn H. Snyder, "The 'New Look' of 1953," in Warner R. Schilling, *et al.*, p. 384. Much of the information in this section is drawn from Snyder's account.

[22] See, C. J. V. Murphy, "The Eisenhower Shift, I," *Fortune* (January, 1956), pp. 86–87.

In short, the new Administration was predisposed from the beginning to establish substantial curbs on defense spending. The impulse to economize was motivated by the same basic considerations that dominated the Truman Administration prior to the Korean War. Moreover, the Eisenhower leadership was committed to an even more conservative assessment of economic needs: that the American economy could flourish only through a systematic reduction in governmental expenditures and controls—that is, the very scope of governmental power over the economy had to be reduced.

Like any party out of power, the Republicans found that prescriptions were easier stated than accomplished. The most immediate cost-saving step was to end the war in Korea and level off the defense buildup that had been undertaken since 1950. These things the Administration moved quickly to accomplish; yet in the face of growing Soviet military strength and technological prowess, the Republican leadership was hard put to find a responsible means of reducing defense expenditures sufficiently to accomplish its economic goals without jeopardizing national security. Indeed, President Eisenhower was convinced within a few months after taking office that in order to maintain an adequate defense program, the general direction of military policy established under the previous administration should be maintained. His proposed shift to the "long-haul" approach supplanted the more crisis-oriented "year of maximum danger" formula of the Truman Administration. But this meant that although expenditures could be stretched out over a longer period of time, the same general policies had to be retained. Sharp reductions and radical alterations were out of the question. When Eisenhower revealed his program privately to a conference of congressional leaders on April 30, 1953,

> the full import . . . was . . . that heavy military spending would continue, that more deficits lay ahead and that the first Republican budget would be out of balance. When this hit [Senator] Robert A. Taft, he went off like a bomb. . . . Fairly shouting and banging his fist on the Cabinet table, Taft declared that all the efforts of the Eisenhower Administration to date had merely produced the net result of continued spending on the same scale as the Truman administration.[23]

Although the President was able to preserve his relationship with the Senator, thus preventing a public denunciation of the program, the import of Taft's criticism was to plague the Administration. In spite of the best intentions of the President and his Cabinet, a way of re-

[23] Robert J. Donovan, *Eisenhower: The Inside Story* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), pp. 108–109.

ducing defense costs substantially without jeopardizing national security proved to be an exceedingly elusive goal.

Sifting the Alternatives

On May 8, 1953, "Operation Solarium," a review of the principal security policy alternatives open to the United States at that time, got under way in The White House sun room, or "solarium."[24] At this meeting three alternative strategies were set before the President for preliminary discussion. The first involved essentially a continuation of the "containment" policy of the Truman Administration. The second suggested the extension of the containment formula to global proportions by drawing a line around the entire world, stating to the Soviet leaders that that line would be defended by threatening severe punishment in response to any aggression (presumably through nuclear retaliation). And the third offered a replacement of the containment policy with one of "liberation" and "roll back," a strategy designed to push back the borders of Soviet control through intensive psychological, political, and economic warfare.

The President suggested that each alternative be assigned to a "task force" and that group develop the best case that could be made for its strategy. "Advocates" were assigned to lead each task force. Interestingly enough, one of the prime movers for containment, George F. Kennan, was put in charge of the first alternative. An Air Force General and a Navy Admiral were assigned to head the second and third alternatives, respectively.

Throughout June and July, the three groups worked on their competing strategy options. At the end of July their reports were sent to the President and then forwarded to the Operations Planning Board of the National Security Council.

By October, the Planning Board had resolved the issue pretty much in favor of the first alternative—a continuation of the policy of "containment"—with some slight modifications in the direction of the second alternative. That is, the board concluded that the basic objective of policy must be to prevent further expansion of the Communist orbit, but that the growing air retaliatory capacity of the United States would be an important deterrent to attempts to expand.[25]

This paper, which was designated NSC–162, provided little encouragement for the prospects of defense reductions. As opposed to

[24] See, C. J. V. Murphy, "The Eisenhower Shift, III," *Fortune* (March, 1956), p. 232; and Snyder, "The 'New Look' of 1953," pp. 406 ff.

[25] Snyder, p. 409.

the knowledge that the Soviets had exploded a thermonuclear device in August and that the Russian long-range air capability was being expanded, it served only to warn that reductions in military forces for the sake of budget savings would be hazardous.

The Sequoia Paper

In the meantime, the President moved to select a new Joint Chiefs of Staff. But even before they took office, they were assigned the task of reviewing the general lines of United States military policy. The Chairman of the new JCS, Admiral Arthur W. Radford, a man who had impressed both Eisenhower and his Secretary of Defense, Charles E. Wilson, at the Helena conference, met in relative seclusion during the summer of 1953 to consider America's global commitments and military capabilities. In early August, to escape from daily distractions and interservice pressures, the Joint Chiefs spent two days aboard the Navy Secretary's yacht, the "Sequoia." There they concluded a "working paper"[26] that set forth the general outlines of their proposed military strategy.

The paper's conclusions were based upon several important assumptions about international politics, among which were that international conditions would not deteriorate and that the buildup of German and Korean military forces would continue as planned. The Joint Chiefs did not recommend changes in the roles and missions of the three services, but they did conclude that American armed forces abroad were overextended, suggesting redeployment of some forces and withdrawal of American troops from Japan and Korea. They felt that the primary responsibility for local defense lay with indigenous forces, supported by American air and sea power, and that the general deployment of American military power should be based on principles of maximum mobility and central reserves. The two most important problems facing the United States, according to the JCS, were continental air defense against growing Soviet air power and the enhancement of America's nuclear retaliatory capabilities.

Thus the "Sequoia" paper, like NSC–162, provided little rationale for radical reductions in defense spending, although the Joint Chiefs fostered a significant change by emphasizing greater strategic retaliatory air power rather than larger ground forces. This change in emphasis gained further momentum in the fall of 1953. The pressure for further economies increased. The Secretary of the Treasury and

[26] For details, see Snyder, "The 'New Look' of 1953," pp. 410–15.

the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, for whom a balanced budget was still a primary objective, exerted particular pressure. However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff resisted the economy drive because, although the termination of hostilities in Korea in July allowed reductions in ground forces, savings from this measure were more than offset by expenditures for air defense and strategic retaliatory forces.

In further pursuit of a reorientation of American military policy, the Joint Chiefs were instructed to take into account the relevance of the defense budget to the American economy and the Federal budget. This sharply contrasted the traditional JCS approach, which left such considerations to civilian leadership. Rather than limiting the Joint Chiefs to purely military factors, they were now instructed to treat the economy itself as a relevant aspect of national security. Moreover, the Office of Comptroller in the Department of Defense went so far as to suggest that a defense budget ceiling of around $35 billion would be a "reasonable" estimate for the "long haul."[27]

New Rationale for Nuclear Deterrence

The tension between the drive for substantial cuts in defense expenditures and the requirement that national security not be jeopardized by economizing measures could be resolved only if a means were devised to achieve more defense for less money—or as the phrase-makers were to call it, "more bang for a buck." Admiral Radford suggested the specific military method for resolving the national-security-versus-national-bankruptcy dilemma: base American defense strategy on a fundamental commitment to use nuclear weapons rather than maintain a capacity to fight every kind of war. By selecting *one* strategy, and a nuclear one at that, substantial saving could be achieved by reductions in conventional armaments and the most expensive of all items—manpower.

The basic suggestion made by Radford appealed greatly to the principal members of the Eisenhower Cabinet. On October 30, 1953, President Eisenhower approved NSC–162/2, a paper that reflected Radford's suggestion to rely principally on nuclear weapons, the strategy that became known as the "New Look" of the Republican Administration. This paper called for the development of military plans based on the use of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.

[27] Snyder, "The 'New Look' of 1953," p. 432.

The directive hinged on a fundamental assumption: that the use of nuclear firepower reduced manpower requirements and costs associated with high force levels. In other words, for purposes of military planning and service doctrine, all future conflicts, except for border skirmishes and other minor incidents, were to be treated as nuclear wars. A "dual capability"—the capacity to fight by either conventional or nuclear means—was to be avoided because that approach was too expensive and because conventional tactics were considered inefficient and obsolete.

This expedient intersection of military and economic rationales led to the formulation of a long-range, or long-haul, program designed to relieve American military forces abroad from their "overextended" positions, and substantially to reduce manpower levels (especially in the Army). These were to be supplanted by modern, superefficient technologies of air power and nuclear weaponry. In practical terms, therefore, "more bang for a buck" meant more nuclear weapons and fewer soldiers.

Massive Retaliation

The emphasis on nuclear weapons was approved in principle at the Helena conference and reaffirmed at various stages of the development of the "New Look" in military policy. The logic of this approach was made most explicit by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles on January 12, 1954, in his celebrated address to the Council on Foreign Relations.[28] Dulles was a vigorous advocate of a strategy of nuclear deterrence as a private citizen and as a special adviser to the State Department. As the official spokesman of the new Administration, Dulles presented a new strategic formula. The United States, he said, had come to a basic decision. "The basic decision was to depend primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our own choosing." That decision, Dulles explained, was motivated by military and economic needs—to obtain "a maximum deterrent at a bearable cost." And this could be best accomplished by reinforcing our "deterrent power" instead of depending on "local defensive power." If the United States continued on the course of the previous Administration "by being ready to fight everywhere," there would be, he argued, "grave budgetary, economic, and social consequences." The United States was henceforth to rely

[28] For text, see *Department of State Bulletin*, XXX (January 25, 1954), pp. 107–110.

on a general strategy of nuclear deterrence even for purposes of local containment. "There is no local defense," said Dulles, "which alone will contain the mighty landpower of the Communist world. Local defenses must be reinforced by the further deterrent of massive retaliatory power."[29]

Thus "massive retaliation," a doctrine hinted at by Administration officials for more than a year, became definite public policy. In some respects the new policy was really not new. The Truman Administration relied implicitly on strategic atomic retaliatory power before the Korean War—and for the same reason: expenditures for other means of defense would have unbalanced the budget. But in the context of the declaration by Secretary Dulles there was a salient and meaningful difference: Dulles meant to apply nuclear deterrence to *local aggression,* particularly in Asia. Nuclear retaliation prior to the Eisenhower Administration applied only to general war, and mostly to a Russian military threat against Western Europe. The "New Look" thus involved an attempt to *extend the range of nuclear deterrence* that might serve as a credible threat to prevent future Koreas.

The policy of massive retaliation stirred grave misgivings at home and abroad. Although Dulles mentioned "massive" retaliation only once in his speech, at other points he stressed the importance of indigenous local defenses backed by American air and naval power. He even mentioned the prospect that "at some times and places, there may be setbacks to the cause of freedom" (that there might be circumstances where the United States would neither defend locally nor retaliate). But most public attention was directed to the implication that any war might be escalated to global nuclear warfare by American retaliation. Responding to his critics' charge that American nuclear policy would explode every local confrontation into a big war, Dulles emphasized the need to have a "capacity" for massive retaliation, which did not mean an inflexible commitment to use nuclear weapons. Although he continued to stress the desirability of relying primarily on air, naval, and nuclear power for strategic as well as tactical purposes, he recognized the necessity for maintaining a capacity to respond at various levels. Or as he candidly observed in an article published to clarify his "massive retaliation" speech, the United States "must not put itself in the position where the only response open to it is general war."[30]

[29] Ibid.

[30] John Foster Dulles, "Policy for Security and Peace," *Foreign Affairs,* XXXII (April, 1954), p. 358.

Efforts by the Administration to allay the doubts that were expressed in the wake of Dulles' doctrine of "massive retaliation" were only partially successful. The retaliatory threat was clarified to the extent that American government spokesmen stated that the United States was committed neither to an inflexible decision to respond to any aggressive act with a massive nuclear attack on the Soviet Union or Red China nor to the incredible proposition that every response would henceforth be nuclear. American policy would be much more selective.

But ambiguity, probably by intention, remained. Communist leaders had been warned by the United States. The possibility of severe punishment was presumed to create a broad spectrum of deterrence. The uncertainty in terms of the exact nature of the American response perhaps increased the potency of the deterrent policy, but it also created anxieties among America's allies. Fear of the consequences of American nuclear retaliatory strategy were to persist, indeed, to grow, as awareness of the destructive potential of thermonuclear weapons, now possessed by *both* sides, became more widely known.

The nuclear equation changed substantially by 1954. America's atomic monopoly ended in 1949. The Russians had developed the hydrogen bomb, keeping pace with the U.S. The Soviet medium-range bomber force was capable of inflicting a crippling nuclear blow against Western Europe, and its long-range bomber inventory was growing. In a sense, therefore, the doctrine of "massive retaliation" was obsolete by the time Dulles gave it its most forceful utterance. The United States inferred it could impose unilateral nuclear punishment on an aggressor. But it was now a two-power nuclear world. The Soviet Union had developed a capacity to reply in kind. Europe was precariously vulnerable to Soviet nuclear threats, and the United States was susceptible to a strike by Russian bombers. As a doctrine, massive retaliation was most suitable to the period of atomic monopoly. But by 1954, the probability that a nuclear threat might trigger a nuclear reply had to be considered. Although the United States still had an overwhelming advantage in terms of strategic air power, neither she nor her allies were immune from a Soviet nuclear counter-threat. The policy of massive retaliation was, therefore, simultaneously less credible and more provocative than its designers intended.

The strategic rationale for the "New Look" policy was deficient because the nuclear threat seemed fully credible only under extreme provocation. To risk nuclear war, the stakes had to be very high

indeed. The American government may have been slow at recognizing the impotency of a deterrent based on a threat that was probably incredible to its adversaries in those many areas that did not immediately threaten America's core interests, but at that time the most significant rationale was economic rather than military. The Eisenhower Administration did not choose, in the words of Vice President Richard M. Nixon, to be "nibbled to death," by the Communists; but more important than that, the Administration refused to be provoked into spending itself into "bankruptcy" in response to crisis after crisis. In preparing for the "long haul," the Administration accepted the prospect of immediate military retrenchment for the sake of long-term political and economic stability.

CHAPTER 5

Toward Mutual Deterrence

Assumptions Behind the "New Look"

The deterrent strategy of the Eisenhower Administration was designed to overcome the "errors" of the Korean War experience. Future Koreas would be deterred by an explicit nuclear retaliatory threat. If the deterrent failed, nonetheless, the United States proposed to punish the aggressor by exploiting its special advantages in military technology—air and sea power, and, quite possibly, selective or massive nuclear retaliatory strikes at the *sources* of aggression. In this way, the United States could avoid matching the Communists "man-for-man" and "gun-for-gun." Moreover, the Communists would never again be allowed the advantage of "sanctuary warfare." They would not be allowed to fight a war by proxy or to introduce so-called "volunteers" without being held militarily accountable. The United States threatened, in other words, to punish the aggressor nation, no matter what means of aggression the enemy chose. The American government declared in advance that it would select methods and means of response that were most acceptable to the United States, rather than allowing adversaries to establish their own ground rules.

The United States clung to the hope throughout the 1950's that it could exploit its presumed technological superiority to reap significant political, economic, and military dividends. But its technology failed to bear the expected fruit. For one thing, the sophisticated machinery of warfare did not always prove superior to manpower; and often, rather than supplanting manpower, it created new requirements for it. The United States was also to discover, painfully, that nuclear weapons and air power were sometimes clumsy and psychologically and politically unsuited to certain situations. Furthermore, modern technology proved costly. Expected savings that were to be achieved by substituting firepower for manpower proved illusory, on the whole; the technological arms race prompted greater and greater efforts to produce better—and therefore, more complicated and expensive—weaponry. Finally, the United States discovered, to its dismay, that in the most essential categories of modern military technology —nuclear weapons and long-range delivery systems—the West held no inherent advantage over the Soviet Union. Indeed, because the United States refused to recognize the closeness of the technolog-

ical arms race until the last moment, the Soviet Union was able ultimately to catch up and in some respects surpass the scientific and technological achievements of the United States.

In short, both the military and economic rationales behind the "New Look" in national security were in some important respects inadequate. Furthermore, the acceptability of the precarious balance between defense requirements and demands for fiscal solvency—a balance that had been agreed on among responsible political and military leaders of the nation—depended largely on the validity of certain key assumptions concerning future conditions in international politics. These assumptions, which at certain stages of the formulation of the "New Look" in 1953 were specified for the purpose of qualifying the agreements reached,[1] were supposed to function as reservations against the "New Look" programs. They specified that: (1) international political conditions would not deteriorate; (2) there would be no alteration in the basic power ratio between the United States and the Soviet Union; (3) there would be no new outbreak of fighting in Korea; (4) the buildup of German, Japanese, and Korean military forces would proceed according to schedule; (5) the war in Indochina would be terminated and the political situation there stabilized; and (6) the European Defense Community plan for the integration of the military forces of NATO would be ratified. With the exception of the assumptions made concerning Korea, none of these premises proved fully accurate. Yet the Administration continued by and large on the track plotted by the "New Look" plan, substantially reducing the size of the ground forces and shifting back to primary reliance on air power and nuclear weapons. General Ridgway later charged that the policy review called the "New Look" was "merely an orientation exercise," and that the real policy determinations were made "shortly after the election in 1952, when President-elect Eisenhower met with some of his future key advisers aboard the U.S.S. Helena . . ."[2] Whether the "New Look" was a "directed verdict," as the Army Chief of Staff had charged, in retrospect it appears quite obvious that the Administration's security policy, was determined by its fiscal policy.

The pace of weapons technology, however, blunted the economy

[1] Army Chief of Staff General Matthew B. Ridgway, who had by no means *recommended* the policies he came to accept *conditionally*, insisted upon making the assumptions explicit. See, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), pp. 286–94; and Snyder, "The 'New Look' of 1953," pp. 442, 453.

[2] Ridgway, p. 289.

ax. Although conventional ground forces were drastically reduced, resulting in a cut in Army expenditures—from a peak of $16.2 billion in fiscal year 1953 to almost half that figure, $8.7 billion, in fiscal year 1956—expenditures for continental defense (increasingly important because of the growing power of Soviet nuclear strike potential), and expenditures for nuclear weapons development and newer tactical and strategic nuclear delivery systems (from atomic cannons to ballistic missiles) affected economic goals of the "New Look." Although a balanced budget was finally achieved in 1955, defense expenditures continued to rise in spite of the Administration's efforts to stabilize them. The international political stability, on which the "New Look" strategic program was explicitly based, and maintenance of American leadership in military technology, on which the program depended, failed to materialize. The United States found itself in an arms race with the Soviet Union, one in which the favorable ratio of power in terms of modern weapons technology was seriously threatened by Soviet progress. Furthermore, international political conditions were hardly stable after the Korean War.

The "New Look" and Local Wars: Indochina

America's experience in the Korean War was unsettling. The Eisenhower Administration was committed to prevent future Koreas, but how was the United States to deal with local "brushfire" wars? The answer seemed to lie in the containment-*plus*-greater-punishment thesis derived from the "solarium conference" in the spring of 1953. The retaliatory threat to aggressors represented only one part of a three-pronged effort to thwart future aggression in the grey areas of the world: (1) the United States sought to draw a clearly defined line around the Sino-Soviet bloc; (2) the line would be defended by encouraging the development of indigenous military power with American military and economic aid; and (3) the inviolability of the line would be guaranteed by the deterrent power of the American retaliatory threat.

A serious challenge to this approach was in the making in Southeast Asia even as the "New Look" was being formulated. After World War II, the French returned to Indochina seeking to reimpose colonial rule. Almost at once, they came in conflict with the forces of nationalism in the region. At first, the French effort to regain control did not have American sympathy or support because of the stigma of colonialism. But after the fall of Nationalist China and the

outbreak of hostilities in Korea, the American government began aiding the French because it believed the role of Communist China was significant in the Indochina conflict.

French efforts went badly. The war put a significant drain on French resources and manpower. After the truce in Korea, Communist pressures mounted in Indochina and the French military situation began to look desperate. The United States was by then providing three fourths of the war cost, but France was as weary of her war as the United States had been of the Korean conflict. The Communists gained strength in Indochina throughout 1953 and in 1954 laid siege to the French fortress at Dienbienphu. The crisis at Dienbienphu was recognized by both sides as the turning point of the war. Either the garrison at Dienbienphu would hold, or the French would suffer humiliating defeat.

The United States government had, in the meantime, expressed serious interest in the outcome of the Indochina conflict. Southeast Asia was defined as vital to the security interests of the United States. In a series of policy statements in the early months of 1954, the President and the Secretary of State implied that the United States was actively considering intervention. To intervene unilaterally was contrary to the Administration's political and military goals. Indeed, a consideration to intervene at all, given the objective of reducing American military forces abroad, reflected the depth of American concern. The President said at his press conference on February 10, 1954, that "no one could be more bitterly opposed to ever getting the United States involved in a hot war in that region than I am," and yet at a press conference on April 7, Eisenhower graphically explained why the United States might be drawn into the Indochina war in spite of itself: "You have a row of dominoes set up," he said, "and you knock over the first one and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly." The "domino theory," which has been very much a part of American strategic rationale in Asia ever since, suggested that the fall of Indochina imperiled the security of Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and the chain of island defenses—Japan, Formosa, and the Philippines—to which the United States was clearly committed. If the domino analogy reflected Administration thinking, then an effort had to be made to keep the *first* domino from toppling.

At a speech in New York at the end of March 1954, Secretary of State Dulles declared that Communist successes in Southeast Asia were "a grave threat to the whole free community." He suggested

that the situation be met "by united action."[3] It was already clearly understood that Dulles' "massive retaliation" speech of January 12, had been made in the context of the Indochina crisis. China was warned, and now the American government was going through a painful process of deciding whether to commit military forces to the conflict.

During this period, the French let it be known that they favored an American air strike to relieve pressure on their embattled garrison at Dienbienphu. Admiral Radford, favoring this approach, viewed intervention by American air power as a method of bailing out the French without getting American military power inextricably entangled. However, General Ridgway, Army Chief of Staff, disagreed vigorously. An Army investigating team sent to Indochina to consider the problem reported that intervention would require eventually a commitment of ground forces probably on the scale of the Korean War. Ridgway forwarded the report to President Eisenhower. "To a man of his military experience its implications were immediately clear," Ridgway later wrote.[4] The President was persuaded that the United States should not intervene unilaterally. A different view, expressed by Vice President Nixon in an off-the-record statement, asserted that if the French withdrew their forces from Indochina, the United States might be compelled to send in American troops ". . . to avoid further Communist expansion in Asia and particularly in Indochina. . . ."[5] But the political storm that followed reports of this remark led Secretary Dulles to state a few days later that the possibility of sending American troops to Indochina was "unlikely." Unilateral action was apparently ruled out.

The only recourse involving United States action acceptable to the President was united action conditioned on (1) a Congressional resolution authorizing American participation; (2) the participation of Britain, Australia, and New Zealand; (3) an invitation to intervene from France, joined by Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; (4) French agreement to see the war through; and (5) a guarantee by France that Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia would be granted unequivocal independence.[6] The American and British governments exchanged cables to this effect in April 1954. Dulles went to London and Paris seeking a general agreement along these lines only to find

[3] Quoted in Donovan, *Eisenhower: The Inside Story*, pp. 259–60.
[4] Ridgway, p. 277.
[5] Quoted in Donovan, p. 266.
[6] Ibid., p. 265.

that the British and French planned instead to convene a nineteen-nation conference in Geneva to seek a negotiated settlement.

On May 7, Dienbienphu fell to the insurgents. On July 21, the French agreed to a cease-fire and the division of Vietnam, with the northern sector under Communist control. Cambodia and Laos were to become independent and French forces and the Communist insurgents were to be withdrawn from those territories.

By means of the 1954 Geneva accords, the French made their peace with the Communists and withdrew. They did so with British backing and embarrassed American acquiescence. France left behind a partitioned Vietnam under Communist control in the north and a pro-western regime in the south. Elections were to be held in July 1956, under international supervision to reunite the country under one government, but they never took place. Bao Dai, the French puppet ruler of the southern sector, was deposed by Ngo Diem. The new ruler was politically ambitious and an ardent nationalist, committed to keeping the territory his regime controlled independent. South Vietnam protested the Geneva agreements and sought complete freedom of action to preserve its independence.

The French suffered a humiliating defeat in Indochina, but so had the United States. The American government had taken on increasing responsibility for the security of Southeast Asia. Towards the end, most of the material aid to the French forces came from the United States. At the same time, China, free of the burdens of the Korean conflict, measurably stepped up military aid to the Communist insurgents in spite of explicit U.S. warnings of the consequences that such measures would precipitate. Yet the United States failed to intervene—massively or in any other way. The first test of the American policy of nuclear deterrence as a means of controlling Communist military expansion suffered a severe reversal. Technically, of course, the American government had conditioned its threats to China on Chinese *intervention,* whereas Chinese involvement remained "indirect" and supportive rather than overt and active. As the crisis at Dienbienphu deepened, the United States further qualified its intervention threat by insisting on "united action" among the Western powers, but that action was not forthcoming. In spite of these qualifications, the defeat of France in Indochina represented a shocking reversal for U.S. policies in the Far East. No sooner had the United States set forth a new and dynamic method for implementing containment—by nuclear deterrence—than her policy was challenged and found lacking.

The nuclear deterrent method was based on a simple formula: issue clear warnings of retaliation in advance, warnings that definitely implied devastating punishment to the aggressor. That was the import of statements made by the President and the Secretary of State as the Indochina crisis came to a head. And although the American threat perhaps deterred the Chinese from direct intervention in the conflict with the French, support of subversion and insurgency does not require direct intervention. In the words of Robert Osgood, the capacity of the Chinese:

> . . . to support a successful insurrection indicates the crucial difference between the problem of containment in Asia and in Europe. In Europe, where the inhabitants have the will to defend themselves against insurrection and subversion, the Communists can expand only by direct military action; but in Asia, where the issue of Communist rule seems largely irrelevant to the prevailing ambitions and hatreds, the Communists can expand by indirect methods and by irregular warfare with the help of an indigenous revolution.[7]

American efforts to confront the Chinese with a deterring threat proved largely irrelevant to the battlefield circumstances in Indochina. In truth, the first effort to substitute modern American military power for local defensive ground power proved utterly futile. The only tangible threat would have been massive conventional power with which to turn the tide of battle. A commitment of that kind was clearly beyond the means and political will of the United States—and even that might not have succeeded. In any event, the failure of the United States to carry out its retaliatory threat in 1954 severely damaged American prestige and cast serious doubts upon the credibility of a policy that the United States government was understandably reluctant to execute.

The Eisenhower Administration rejected the most obvious lesson of the Korean war: that a strategic nuclear threat does not prevent local military defeats. The Republican Administration assumed that the U.S. failed to deter the attack on South Korea because its threat was not explicit. The experience in Indochina showed that the capacity to *deny* an adversary a local military victory with local defensive forces was an important aspect of a successful containment policy. The only region in which local defense capabilities were being developed was Europe, by means of the NATO alliance. Asian and Middle Eastern states that were politically unstable and weak mili-

[7] Osgood, *Limited War*, p. 223.

tarily were vulnerable to subversion, insurgency, and local attack. Could they be defended?

Drawing the Line

The new American policy of containment through nuclear deterrence, as stated by Secretary Dulles in his famous massive retaliation speech, sought to divide the military responsibilities of the "free world" along functional lines. According to this view, the United States possessed the strategic arsenal needed to deter major aggression and backstop minor incursions. The Administration recognized the necessity of local defenses, but instead of spreading American troops around the globe, it preferred to promote local military strength. That burden was to be shouldered by the allies with American help. The problem, basically, was to draw an explicit line of defense around the free world, declare America's intent to punish any aggressor that violated the line, and help local military forces develop fighting strength.

The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization

Events in Indochina overtook the American government before it could implement its new global military policy. Soon after the defeat of the French in Indochina, however, the United States sponsored the Manila Conference for the purpose of establishing a Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a pact that served as the instrument of military alliance for local defense and American deterrence in Southeast Asia. The U.S. already had security pacts with Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand, but the Far Eastern defense perimeter, according to the American view, had to be moved forward to prevent further expansion by China. The United States also needed a means with which to preserve British and French power and responsibility in the region within an acceptable noncolonial framework.

Although the United States hoped to join a number of Asian nations together in a collective defense pact backed by Western power, only three—Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines—accepted the invitation along with the non-Asian signatories: France, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. India, Burma, Indonesia, and Ceylon refused to align themselves with a coalition that they considered provocative and neocolonial.

Unlike NATO, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization did not involve the assignment of additional military forces to the region or precise commitments in case of armed conflict. Each member agreed to meet armed aggression, direct or indirect, "in accordance with its constitutional processes."[8] A special protocol extended SEATO protection to South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia at their invitation or consent.

Thus, SEATO was created to check further Communist incursions in Southeast Asia and to provide a framework for action in case new aggressions developed. It provided the United States with an alternative to the Geneva agreements on Indochina that the American government had neither signed nor altogether approved, although it had taken note of their existence. In short, despite the serious setback in Indochina, the U.S. government moved quickly to establish a defense pact that served to warn against further Communist moves into Southeast Asia and that promised additional American economic aid to the region to beef up local resistance. SEATO was part and parcel of the redesigned containment program of the Eisenhower Administration. A clear line was drawn, but not at the expense of additional commitments of American forces to defend the region. SEATO depended on American military support—but it was to be long-distance support. Thus, in spite of the absence of specific measures to increase military power in the region, Secretary Dulles stated with confidence that SEATO would make "a substantial contribution to preserve free government in Southeast Asia and to prevent communism from rushing into the Pacific area, where it would seriously threaten the defense of the United States."[9]

In retrospect, America's new formal commitment to the defense of Southeast Asia was more serious than it at first appeared, because the power struggle had just reached a new stage. Laos and Vietnam were to go through a series of crises in which American involvement became ever deeper and more complex.

The Bagdad Pact: Closing the Ring

In the Middle East, United States interest and involvement increased as British power in the region waned. Much as the American government had done in Southeast Asia, a non-colonial means of insuring the region's security was under active consideration. During

[8] *Treaties and Other International Acts Series* 3170, p. 3.
[9] *Department of State Bulletin,* XXXI (September 27, 1954), p. 432.

the same spring that France was suffering defeat in Indochina, Great Britain was forced (albeit without war) to abandon her great military base in the Suez. In an agreement with Egypt, Britain was to withdraw her eighty thousand troops beginning in July 1954.

In the meantime the United States, through the diplomatic initiative of Secretary of State Dulles, was actively considering a Middle East security organization. Fearing that Western initiative for such an arrangement might hinder its development in a region now intensely sensitive to so-called neocolonialism, Dulles set about to persuade key nations on the Middle Eastern perimeter—those adjacent to the Soviet Union (or nearly so)—to take the first step toward a local mutual security alliance. As Dulles declared in a major policy address after touring the Middle East during the spring of 1953, "the northern tier of nations [in the Middle East] show awareness of the danger" of the Soviet threat. He noted

> . . . a vague desire to have a collective security system. But no such system can be imposed from without. It should grow from within out of common destiny and common danger.
>
> While awaiting the formal creation of a security association, the United States can usefully help strengthen the interrelated defense of those countries which want strength . . . to resist the common threat to all people.[10]

This "invitation" to the northern tier to consider the advantages of collective defenses ultimately stimulated some interest in Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq. The United States already was providing Turkey with military and economic aid. Early in 1954, Turkey and Pakistan were nearing the conclusion of a mutual defense agreement. The United States, therefore, approved aid to Pakistan pending the final agreement with Turkey. Iraq then joined the alliance in defiance of objections by other Arab states, particularly Egypt, which was seeking Arab unity and nonalignment. By this time the British government was taking a keen interest in the budding alliance because it needed new ways to protect British economic and political interests in the Middle East. In April 1955, Britain formally associated herself with the Pact, and in October, Iran, the last nation of the northern tier, also joined.

When the first formal meeting of the new regional defense organization was called, in November 1955, the only prospective member yet to be associated was the United States. Although the American

[10] *Department of State Bulletin,* XXVIII (June 15, 1953), p. 835.

government, in fact, initiated the alliance and encouraged its development, Dulles began to have serious misgivings about a formal American commitment. The formation of the alliance had an adverse impact on the Arab states and Israel because of the inclusion of Iraq. Egypt felt betrayed and outflanked, and Israel resented arms aid to an Arab state. The State Department decided the United States should delay joining the northern tier group until the matter became less sensitive to bordering states—something that never happened. American association therefore remained informal.

In spite of the minor political snag caused by internal political jealousies in the Middle East, the arc of American-sponsored alliances was finally closed. The great military alliance in Europe, NATO, was now tied, through Turkey, to the new Middle Eastern alliance, the Bagdad Pact. This pact, in turn, was connected directly to SEATO by Pakistan's joint membership. And SEATO was linked to Formosa, Korea, and Japan through American bilateral agreements. The line had been drawn—on paper at least—joining what was loosely called the "free world" in a series of interconnected defense treaties under the general sponsorship and central strategic responsibility of the United States.

The Alliance Network

In skeletal form, the emerging pattern of American global diplomacy was manifested in alignment and aid to friendly nations around the world backed by her strategic nuclear deterrent threat. The pattern was logical and appealingly simple. In practice, of course, it was far from simple. The creation of pacts did not measurably increase the military potential of the overall alliance structure. Indeed, if anything, it tended to involve the United States even more deeply in the affairs of nations it could not defend. And although the alignment process perhaps provided the Soviet Union and China with clear warnings necessary to deter overt Communist aggression, the process also heightened political jealousies and resentments among aligned and nonaligned nations. Neutrals were particularly offended. Many such governments felt that the alliances drew their regions into involvement in the Cold War struggle, which their policies ardently sought to avoid. American military aid tended to encourage regional and local arms races. The Soviet Union soon discovered that it could "leap-frog" over the global defense line and provide military and economic assistance to nations that took the greatest offense to the American alliance process.

The global alliance system created by the diplomacy of John Foster Dulles suffered from extreme internal inconsistencies and failed to achieve its basic purposes: to provide a practical, inexpensive means for defeating local aggression and to combine the manpower strength of the "free world" with the technological superiority of the United States which would constitute an overwhelming deterrent to Communist global expansion. Local military crises were still to require the application of American military power with mixed and uncertain results, revealing in almost every case the continued need for a sizable American conventional military capability (pared down considerably by the "New Look"). At the same time, America's strategic weapons superiority was more openly subject to challenge by the Soviet Union's growing nuclear and missile power.

The Nuclear Stalemate

By 1954, the balance of strategic military power began to shift perceptibly. The United States was still, by all measures, the predominant military power. It had the largest nuclear arsenal and the longest-ranged, most numerous, most widely dispersed strategic bomber forces in the world. This overwhelming U.S. superiority in strategic weapons more than made up for deficiencies in ground forces. If the political contest developed into a military showdown, the United States could cripple or destroy the Soviet Union. The Russians did not possess a comparable capability, but there was evidence that it might soon be developed.

The main problem for the United States, as it had always been, was to translate its military power into an effective instrument of the nation's diplomacy. The combination of air power and nuclear weapons had created more the illusion of political influence than its reality. Nuclear power operated as a deterrent to high-risk actions by America's adversaries, but it had little positive effect on the course of international politics. The United States seemed to be in a good position to prevent large-scale military assaults upon the American homeland and the territory of its most important allies. But it had only marginal influence on events of lesser significance. Air-atomic power did not prevent the Czechoslovakian coup, the Berlin blockade, the attack upon South Korea, and the Indochina War—to cite some prominent examples. When these crises occurred, the United States did not retaliate because retaliation was not relevant to the event. None of the conflicts was worth the price of a nuclear war.

In spite of the lack of success of the nuclear deterrent, the United States pursued the same essential course in terms of its military policy. Even after Dienbienphu the "New Look" relied upon a massive retaliatory threat while continuing to minimize the value of American ground forces. Even as the lessons of major crises of the 1950's seemed to point to the need for a less drastic recourse than nuclear war, evidence emerged that Soviet nuclear power was growing at a rapid pace. The prospect of a nuclear stalemate further reduced the rationality of a national strategy that relied upon instruments that might ultimately become self-destructive.

Specifically, by 1954 the Russian long-range air force had begun to take ominous shape. A twin-jet medium-range bomber was being produced in large quantities. In-flight refueling techniques made medium-range bombers a potential threat not only to Western Europe but also to the United States. In 1955, American military observers were further alarmed when they witnessed *more* Soviet long-range jets flying in one air demonstration than existing comparable American B–52 bombers.[11] As a consequence, air power enthusiasts warned of an approaching "bomber gap." An additional appropriation of $900 million was pushed through the Senate to accelerate U.S. strategic bomber production in spite of the President's opposition.

The fear that the Soviet Union might seek to challenge America's bomber supremacy proved to be illusory. The Soviet air demonstration of 1955 undoubtedly was a subterfuge. Indeed, the Russians soon exhibited an intercontinental rocket capability that suggested they intended to bypass the strategic bomber arms race to get ahead of the United States in a new, more powerful offensive weapons category.

The Russians did not challenge American strategic weapons *supremacy;* they simply developed *sufficient* nuclear capabilities and long-range bombers to threaten a nuclear reprisal or surprise attack on the United States and/or its major allies. Massive retaliation and nuclear deterrence had become, by the mid-1950's, bipolar. Nuclear threat begat nuclear counter-threat. A balance of terror was emerging.

Both sides began to admit that the avoidance of nuclear war was of mutual interest and in the interest of all humanity. The President of the United States, although relying, as a matter of national strategy, on the efficacy of the nuclear threat as a deterrent to Russian

[11] U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on the Air Force of the Committee on Armed Services, *Study of Airpower,* 84th Congress, 2d Sess., 1956, p. 1262.

and Chinese aggression, nevertheless described nuclear war as "unthinkable." In the face of a potential nuclear holocaust President Eisenhower was to conclude that there was "no alternative to peace." In the Soviet Union, too, political leaders began to evince similar fears. Stalin's death in 1953 released the military professionals from unswerving conformity with Stalin's World War II military doctrines. As a result, they began to consider the importance of surprise attack and the integration of nuclear weapons technology into military planning. And although this new stimulus to develop nuclear weapons and strategic strike systems had its impact on the Soviet military posture, the new political leadership acknowledged the threat of mutual nuclear disaster. Malenkov, who replaced Stalin as Premier and for a time headed the collective leadership in the Kremlin, declared that nuclear war could be catastrophic for all mankind; it could destroy the socialist camp as well as the capitalist.

Although Malenkov was deposed and the new Soviet leadership insisted that Russia must develop her nuclear forces beyond a minimum deterrent posture, they nevertheless exhibited a wariness about nuclear war similar to President Eisenhower's. Both sides, in other words, were willing to admit that the mutual nuclear hazard called for a tacit acceptance of "peaceful coexistence."

Tactical Nuclear Weapons

In spite of the American government's growing uneasiness about the consequences of nuclear war, the general strategic view of the "New Look" was maintained throughout the Eisenhower Administration. The possibility of limited war was recognized. In considering the necessary means for dealing effectively with local conflicts, however, the United States consistently aimed at: redeployment of American forces to a strategic reserve; greater emphasis on indigenous armies for primary defense; and a practical means for utilizing the American nuclear weapons arsenal to deter conflicts and to defeat armed attacks anywhere, if and when they occurred.

The dual objective of American military policy during this period can be described as an effort to stretch nuclear deterrence across the widest possible spectrum of potential conflict and, by the same token, conserve military manpower by supplanting conventional armed forces with nuclear armed forces. The latter objective was implemented through the development in doctrine, weaponry, and organization, of tactical as well as strategic nuclear war capabilities.

The impulse or temptation to apply nuclear technology to tactical military conditions, of course, predates the Eisenhower Administration. General Omar Bradley indicated as far back as October 1949, that the atomic bomb might be used for tactical purposes "since it tends to strengthen a defensive army."[12] Studies initiated under the code name "Project Vista" at the California Institute of Technology explored the potential application of atomic weapons to local battlefield situations. By 1953, political, economic, and military rationales tended to coincide: wars needed to be deterred at the least possible cost, and by means that utilized the best technology available in order to overcome Communist manpower advantages. In October 1953, as a part of the formulation of the "New Look" policy, the President authorized the Joint Chiefs of Staff to base American military planning on the use of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons against conventional attacks whenever their employment would provide a distinct military advantage.[13] In December 1954, NATO followed the lead of American military policy and adopted for planning purposes a tactical nuclear strategy.

By the mid-1950's, therefore, the United States was relying heavily on the efficacy of nuclear power for deterrence and defense. Presumably the Soviet Union was not far behind in nuclear technology, if not in actual weapons stockpiles. But the fearful destructiveness of nuclear weapons—in particular the enormous explosive power of the new fusion type—made nuclear war increasingly illogical as an answer to low-level military challenges. The nuclear stalemate at the upper level of the conflict spectrum was extended downward when East and West decided to employ tactical nuclear weapons in armed conflicts. And although the broad spectrum of stalemate might have had a stabilizing effect in terms of military deterrence, it also raised the prospect that, in the event of military confrontation in the absence of local conventional superiority, a nuclear power might have only two options: (1) to use nuclear weapons and incur the risk of escalation and utter devastation; or (2) to acquiesce to local defeat.

The American decision to adopt a tactical nuclear weapons strategy did not, therefore, resolve the manpower problem at all. On the one hand, it was not self-evident that tactical employment of nuclear

[12] "This Way Lies Peace," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 15, 1949, p. 170. Morton H. Halperin indicates that the military began considering the tactical capabilities of atomic weapons in 1948; see his *Limited War in the Nuclear Age* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1963), p. 59.

[13] Osgood, *NATO: The Entangling Alliance*, p. 103.

weapons favored the defenders, as had been assumed; war games indicated that much higher casualty rates would be sustained in a "limited" nuclear battlefield engagement and that much wider dispersal and depth of battle zones would be needed to avoid inviting a nuclear strike. This would require more rather than less manpower than a comparable conventional battle. On the other hand, the extreme risk of nuclear escalation that characterizes an unstable multinuclear-power world makes it more reasonable, or less risky, to maintain a "dual" capability (military capacity to fight with or without the use of nuclear weapons), leaving the option open and dependent upon the circumstances and the adversary's choice of weapons. Although American policy appeared throughout the 1950's to treat nuclear weapons as a primary means of defense as well as deterrence, conventional military forces were never entirely abandoned. But the strength of America's ground forces was obviously insufficient to be committed conventionally for a sustained period in a limited war without either resorting to nuclear weapons or rapidly mobilizing more manpower.

Nuclear Weapons and NATO Policy

Nowhere were the dilemmas of nuclear strategy more clearly drawn than in the NATO alliance. The defense planning for Western Europe had to take into account the possibility of limited probes and major assaults by either conventional or nuclear means. In the first years of the Alliance, of course, a basic weakness existed in conventional ground forces. The United States had provided the nuclear guarantee for Europe's protection; but until the commitment of American ground troops to NATO in 1951, no serious effort had been made to check the Soviet ground threat. It took the Korean War to stimulate the response in Europe to the military weaknesses that had been apparent all along. But few governments were willing to address themselves to the problem outside the context of an evident and compelling threat.

The Korean War scare provided that compulsion. At that time the greatest concern, quite understandably, was the disparity between the ground forces of NATO and those of the Communist forces to the East. At a meeting of the NATO Council in Lisbon in February 1952, ambitious force goals were established. It was agreed that 97 divisions, half active, half reserves, be created by the end of 1954. But this promise was never to be fulfilled. About the time the goals

were set, tensions began to decline and with them the compulsion to sacrifice other values for military rearmament.

The death of Stalin and the negotiations for a Korean truce suggested a change in Soviet tactics, a change in which military aggression was likely to play a subordinate role. The shift appeared to be toward peaceful, although certainly competitive, coexistence. The people of Western Europe were anxious to reap the benefits of their economic renaissance. They were not convinced that they could contribute much to their own defense; many believed that their defense depended fundamentally on the clear commitment of the United States in a European defense system. The physical involvement of American troops in Europe guaranteed an American response in the event of Soviet attack. From this viewpoint, NATO ground forces were really an elaborate hostage system or "trigger" to convince the Soviets that American retaliation would be automatic.

In the meantime, the emerging nuclear stalemate at the strategic level and the concurrent development of tactical or battlefield atomic weapons led to a decision made in December 1954 to hinge NATO defenses on tactical atomic weapons. The Lisbon force levels were abandoned in favor of military technology, which promised to substitute firepower for manpower.

But the decision to nuclearize NATO was no more satisfactory than the decision at Lisbon to rebuild conventional strength. Tactical atomic warfare depended for its efficacy on limited and precisely controlled battle. In the event of war in Europe, would each side refrain from attacking the cities of the other? Could the arena of combat be strictly limited? In a region of such dense population, was defense by limited atomic war a realistic, acceptable plan? The incentives for expansion of a European conflict seemed to outweigh other considerations. The cutting off of supply lines and the destruction of supply centers might escalate the fighting. There were no convenient geographic boundaries such as existed in Korea. The losing side might wish to escalate anyway in a desperate effort to change the tide of battle. The odds in favor of expansion of a European conflict seemed overwhelming. This appeared increasingly to be the case because the Soviet armies also began to integrate battlefield atomic weapons into their ground and tactical air forces. The tactical atomic defense of Europe was hardly likely to be a one-sided strategy. This was not the age of atomic monopoly. There was no certainty that atomic weapons would favor the defender.

On the other hand, the prospect of atomic war in Europe height-

ened the risk of strategic nuclear war and extreme damage to all parties. This probably reinforced the nuclear stalemate across the board. The spectrum of deterrence was being stretched by the atomic capabilities of both sides, further reducing the probability of warfare in Europe but at the same time making the consequences of war infinitely more devastating. But the paradox of military stability that arises from the so-called balance of terror is that it makes limited and ambiguous forms of aggression more likely than overt attacks—and infinitely more difficult to meet and defeat. As Robert Osgood has noted, "the overall stability of the military balance requires a large and diversified military capability, lest stability at the top or most violent end of the spectrum of deterrence lead to instability at the lower end."[14] This was the dilemma that NATO faced from the moment that its tactical atomic power became a reality. It made the advantage of conventional, non-nuclear forces more significant because these forces did not imply as clearly the risk of nuclear escalation. This was a point to which the Kennedy Administration was to address itself during the Berlin crisis of 1961. But until that time, the United States urged its NATO partners to contribute the major manpower while the American government supplied the firepower. As Osgood observed:

> . . . If the richest and most powerful ally felt compelled to rely upon nuclear deterrence and less upon ground resistance in order to bring economic and military necessities into "realistic focus" [Eisenhower's phrase], why should her less affluent partners continue to sacrifice their economic advancement for the construction of a large ground force?[15]

Competing Strategies of Deterrence

With the evident growth of Russia's strategic nuclear strength, the United States made adjustments in its foreign and military policies in an attempt to accommodate itself to the realities of the Soviet military threat. These adjustments were relatively minor in terms of the overall military posture of the United States. American reliance upon nuclear deterrence remained fundamental, yet the government tended to soften its threat, to be more receptive to the notion of peaceful coexistence, and to be more aware of the special challenge of limited war in the nuclear age. The "New Look" program, after all, had been based upon a premise of overwhelming American strategic

[14] Ibid., p. 14.
[15] Ibid., p. 104.

weapons supremacy. By 1955, however, it was evident that the Soviets were challenging the United States. Modern long-range bombers were in production. Atomic and hydrogen bombs were operational and were becoming plentiful. It was also known that the Russians were testing ballistic missiles. A presidential committee studying the implications of Soviet rocket technology warned that unless the United States accelerated its own program, the Soviet Union could achieve a decisive lead in the missiles field by 1960.[16]

Although the United States has retained its supremacy in strategic air and missile power throughout the two decades of the nuclear age, it is apparent in retrospect that this is partly a result of Soviet policy choices rather than consistent American determination to stay ahead. The last time that the Eisenhower Administration proclaimed its intention to maintain an air power lead was in 1955. Thereafter, Administration spokesmen referred to "sufficiency" rather than supremacy in connection with the quantity and quality of strategic weapons necessary to deter the Soviet Union. The President believed that the United States should have sufficient power for deterrence, but no more. He aimed at an "adequate" military posture, rejecting the demands by critics, especially those alarmed by Soviet air and missile power, that the United States retain a quantitative lead in strategic weapons. President Eisenhower was convinced that to be secure the nation required sufficient power to destroy an adversary; but he believed, in effect, that enough was enough.

As Samuel P. Huntington has pointed out,[17] two major counterproposals were made in 1956 but rejected by the President. One proposal, advocated in the main by Admiral Radford, would have committed the United States to a continued effort to maintain its air power lead at the further expense of American ground forces. Radford proposed to reduce military manpower by 800,000 men by cutting back conventional forces sharply and by withdrawing troops from overseas bases—the latter move to be made possible by a shift from dependence on medium-range B–47 bombers at overseas bases to intercontinental B–52 bombers based in the United States. Thus, the United States would have more money to invest in air power without increasing overall defense expenditures.

The second proposal came from the Congress itself. Leaders in both the House and Senate expressed concern about the projected decline in the relative strength of American long-range air power as

[16] Huntington, p. 89.
[17] Ibid., pp. 99 ff.

opposed to the Soviet Union's. There were widespread demands that the United States make every effort to retain its lead, but not, as Radford had argued, at the expense of manpower. Many spokesmen anticipated or advocated an absolute increase in defense expenditures. The Senate, as a result of its *Study of Airpower* (hearings) of 1956,[18] proposed a $900 million increase in Air Force appropriations, but President Eisenhower remained steadfastly opposed.

A third, and muted criticism, was voiced during this same period to the effect that the United States was basing too much reliance upon strategic air power, a dimension of power in which a balance of terror existed, and paying too little attention to the requirements for fighting limited and local engagements where the armed challenges were most likely to occur, but for which the United States was least prepared.[19] Although this view was to receive more attention after 1960, this claim on military priorities ran up against demands for greater expenditures for strategic aircraft and the basic decision within the Administration to hold the line on all categories of military spending.

Behind these differences over military priorities lay some fundamental assumptions about the type of military posture necessary to implement effectively the strategy of nuclear deterrence. A variety of distinctions about nuclear deterrent strategies have been made; several are now sufficiently pertinent to identify further.

The most primitive form of nuclear deterrence is the simple threat of *nuclear reprisal.* This was the nature of America's earliest atomic threat. The enemy was to be dealt an atomic blow delivered by American strategic bombers as punishment for a hostile act. Little effort was made at the time to distinguish between (1) the deterrent *threat,* (2) the course of action that would be undertaken to implement that threat, and (3) the further actions that might be necessary to gain a victory.

Later the nuclear threat was made more explicit and tied more clearly to American foreign policy through the doctrine of *"massive retaliation."* This policy has already been discussed in some detail in connection with the "New Look" policies of the Eisenhower Administration.

Because the massive retaliation threat was deficient in several re-

[18] See fn. 11, p. 81.

[19] See, for example, General Maxwell D. Taylor's account of his efforts to improve the Army's local war capabilities, in his *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959).

spects, in particular in the incredibility of its relevance to limited and ambiguous hostile acts, the doctrine was further refined. Nuclear reprisals would be *"selective"* in order to make the punishment fit the crime. By implication there existed a sliding scale of threats in which the United States allowed to itself more flexible intermediate responses depending upon the nature of the act and the identity of the aggressor. Some came to call this approach *"graduated deterrence,"*[20] a strategy of intentional escalation by selective and controlled nuclear reprisal with a view to increasing the punishments until the adversary desists. The American nuclear deterrent strategy exhibited some of the sliding-scale characteristics of nuclear threat by the late 1950's, although for the most part the deterrence policy of the Eisenhower years seemed to imply that there were only two levels of nuclear response: local (or tactical), and central (or strategic).

During the first Eisenhower Administration, American nuclear deterrent strategy was based first upon the massive retaliatory threat and then moved toward the selective and possibly graduated retaliatory threat. During the second Republican Administration, however, nuclear deterrence became a more explicit issue within the government. Just as some defended a military program of "sufficiency" and others insisted that air power supremacy was the key to effective deterrence of Soviet aggression, so a related argument developed. Essentially, the argument was this: some maintained that the greatest deterrent effect would be achieved by the threat to strike enemy cities (a counter-city strategy), and others, that the greater deterrent was the threat to destroy enemy military installations, in particular his bomber and missile sites (a counterforce strategy).

The counter-city targeting system threatened the destruction of the enemy's most important values: his population, industry, and material wealth. Because cities are vulnerable to nuclear devastation, it was conceivable to construct a nuclear strike force of a finite or minimum size that could destroy almost all the cities targeted (depending, of course, upon such variables as the accuracy of the weapons and the nature of the enemy's defenses). A *finite deterrent* strategy, therefore, promised to devastate the enemy's most important values by using strategic attack forces of a size determined primarily by the number of enemy cities targeted.

On the other hand, a *counterforce strategy* threatened the enemy's strategic forces—the bomber and missile forces that might otherwise

[20] See, for example, Anthony W. Buzzard, "Massive Retaliation and Graduated Deterrence," *World Politics*, VIII (January 1956), pp. 228–37.

be employed against the United States. The requirements of an adequate counterforce capability hinged directly on the quantity, dispersal, and vulnerability of the enemy nuclear air-missile systems. As Soviet capabilities in this category improved quantitatively and qualitatively, the requirements for maintaining an effective counterforce posture multiplied rapidly. It was not sufficient simply to stay ahead of the Russians; a counterforce posture demanded sufficient strategic weapons to "take out" all of the Soviet counterparts. If, to conjecture, it takes three American missiles to insure the destruction of one Soviet missile site, then for every additional Russian site that is built, three American missiles must be added to the strategic arsenal.

By 1958, it was possible to project sufficiently that as the Soviet strategic force became less vulnerable to nuclear destruction—by a combination of techniques such as hardening the missile sites (placing the missiles in underground concrete silos), dispersal, diversification of the delivery systems, and improvement of active defense systems —the capacity for the United States to maintain a counterforce capability would become strained and perhaps ultimately unfeasible.

The counterforce and finite deterrent arguments reflected interservice rivalries as well as basic differences in approach to the problem of retaining an effective deterrent posture. The Air Force identified itself with the counterforce argument, insisting that its panoply of long-range bombers and forthcoming intercontinental ballistic missiles should be built in sufficient quantity to retain a counterforce capability in order to counteract the consequences of stalemate (the balance of terror) as well as to retain a capacity to "win" a war, if it should come to that, by defeating the opponent's military forces.

The Navy, on the other hand, developed a rival strategic weapon system—the Polaris fleet ballistic missile submarine. Proponents of this system argued that a finite number of missile submarines, virtually invulnerable to Soviet attack and destruction, could hold all of the cities and industrial centers of the Soviet Union hostage against a nuclear attack on the United States or other vital areas. The Navy's argument had special appeal: in the long run the Polaris system would be less expensive than an Air Force counterforce system because the number of submarines needed to launch enough missiles to destroy Soviet cities could be determined without regard to the size of the Soviet strategic force.

The Army supported the strategic arguments of the Navy because only a finite deterrent posture would allow enough leeway within normal peacetime budgetary restrictions for the armed services to

develop the limited war forces so vital to the Army's mission. Adoption of a minimum deterrent force would result, ultimately, in a decline in the ratio of defense expenditures devoted to strategic weapons and a shift in emphasis to limited war capabilities. Nuclear stalemate would generally proscribe the use of nuclear weapons at the strategic level, but it probably would *not* deter limited, local, ambiguous aggressions. Thus, establishing a finite deterrent posture, which the Administration was inclined to adopt because it was in accord with its budgetary restrictions and sufficiency rationale, represented accepting as inevitable a condition of mutual deterrence; an effort to achieve a counterforce capability instead represented a decision to retain strategic predominance.

The Missile Gap

In spite of adjustments by the American government in response to the evident expansion of Soviet central war capabilities, the initial Soviet space achievements (with their obvious military implications) came as a severe shock. On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched man's first artificial earth satellite. Soaring around the globe with that tiny metallic object went Soviet prestige in science, technology, and military prowess.

The Administration had known for several years that the Soviet Union had a substantial lead in ballistic missile development. Indeed, in adopting a military posture premised upon the concept of sufficiency, the Administration acknowledged that in certain aspects of military power it was accepting the prospect of Soviet parity or perhaps even superiority. The President had been urged to undertake a program of public explanation, "Operation Candor," that would alert the public to the implications of the nuclear weapons arms race for American power and security.[21] That advice was rejected on the assumption that a program of that kind would only alarm the American people and their allies. As a result, Sputnik came both as a surprise—Russia rather than the United States had achieved the dramatic space "first"—and as a shocking challenge to American and Western complacency: our sciences and technology had been thought to be far advanced over those of the Soviet Union.

The Administration was not as disturbed as the public. It had decided to separate its "scientific" space program from the ballistic

[21] See W. W. Rostow, *The United States in the World Arena* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 316–19 ff.

missile programs of the armed services to prevent any inference about military designs on space. In doing this, it implicitly rejected a goal some thought worth aiming at: that the United States attempt at all costs to launch the world's first satellite to enhance national prestige. The decision to ignore the prestige factor reflected a basic lack of imagination and a failure to anticipate the psychological reaction that took place after the Soviet achievement. In the wake of Sputnik I, the soul-searching in the United States went much deeper than a critical reevaluation of American defense policy and the pace of American science and technology. The very values of our society and the objectives to which the United States had set its course were questioned.

For some prominent Americans—leading scientists, academicians, journalists, and businessmen—the sudden development of a vaunted Soviet ICBM capability (announced by the Soviet Union in August and demonstrated to a skeptical world through the launching of an earth satellite in October) proved to be not a surprise, but a confirmation of their own private assessments of the military facts of that time. Several years prior to the shock of Sputnik, many Americans of influence and position had concluded that the defense efforts of the U.S. government were deficient in several respects. They had derived their information from many different sources: from university studies and Congressional hearings; through participation in advisory groups; as scientists or managers engaged in one or another aspect of military research and development; and through enterprising journalism.

By 1957, consensus among these rather well-informed elites seemed to develop. That concensus was reflected in two reports highly critical of American military policy: the Gaither Report, a secret study conducted at the request of the President; and the Rockefeller Report, a private study initiated by Nelson Rockefeller.[22] Both groups concluded that the United States needed to improve virtually all aspects of its military posture, from its strategic retaliatory forces —where there was prospect of a missile gap—to limited war forces

[22] The Gaither Report has not been made public. See, however, the article by Chalmers Roberts, *The Washington Post,* December 20, 1957, p. A–1; and an informed account by Morton H. Halperin, "The Gaither Committee and the Policy Process," *World Politics,* XIII (April, 1961), pp. 360–84. The Rockefeller Report, on the other hand, was published under the title: *International Security: The Military Aspect,* Report of Panel II of the Special Studies Project, Rockefeller Brothers Fund (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958).

—for which more airlift and greater manpower commitments were deemed essential. In keeping with the expanding range of Soviet strategic forces, great emphasis was placed upon the vulnerability of our retaliatory weapons and the gaping inadequacies in our civil defense policies and programs.

Although they did not state their views openly, these private but influential critics of American defense policies had concluded that the power equation was shifting—and shifting radically—in favor of the Soviet Union. Both reports recommended sharp increases in defense expenditures. The Rockefeller Report suggested "additional expenditures of approximately $3 billion for the next several years" and the Gaither Committee is reported to have recommended much greater expenditures ($5 billion a year for civil defense shelter programs alone plus steeply rising expenditures in other defense programs).

Despite the crisis mood of the nation, the Administration made every effort to discount the alarmist interpretations of the critics and to minimize the military implications of the Russian Sputniks. The President was firmly committed to the steady long-haul approach to defense spending. He refused to be stampeded. Adjustments were made to reduce the vulnerability of SAC bombers through enhanced warning systems, dispersal, and improved alert procedures. The ballistic missile programs and the space efforts were accelerated. But the overall impression was one of grudging and incremental change rather than new departures, and at that, only in *one* category of military policy—strategic nuclear deterrence. The other recommendations, pertaining to expensive programs for improvement in conventional weapons, air and sea-lift, and civil defense, were rejected. Indeed, the Administration further reduced military manpower in fiscal 1959 to accommodate in part its upward adjustments in the strategic weapons category within its budget.

Although the attentive elites had failed to move the government to respond vigorously to the Soviet challenge—one that some believed could reverse completely the power ratio between the two major nuclear powers—their assessments and recommendations did reach the general public, especially in terms of the alleged missile gap that many in and out of government felt would occur in the early 1960's. The possibility of a Soviet lead in intercontinental ballistic missiles was openly acknowledged by some officials of the American government. For example, Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy, testifying before a Congressional committee in 1958, said:

We have no positive evidence that they are ahead of us in the long-range missile. We are conducting ourselves on the assumption that they are ahead of us, and I think we should so conduct ourselves. But we have no positive evidence that they are ahead of us in long-range missiles.[23]

Some semantic sparring took place over whether a missile gap would lead to a "deterrent gap," but Administration spokesmen confidently asserted that it would not. The heart of the issue lay in the speculation that the Soviet Union might gain, however momentary, a strategic missile counterforce capability (the capacity to "take-out" most of America's vulnerable retaliatory forces in a surprise "first-strike"). It was argued that the Soviets might have special incentive to launch a preventive war during its momentary missile advantage, because it would be the only time in the foreseeable future that the Russians would have effective counterforce capability. Once America shifted its reliance from vulnerable strategic bombers and unprotected first-generation ballistic missiles to hardened and dispersed mobile second-generation missiles, the opportunity to defeat the United States in one swift nuclear blow would be gone—perhaps forever. From some outside critics' viewpoint, the risk that the Administration was taking with such complacence seemed intolerable and unjustified.

It is possible that the President knew that what he knew could not very well be revealed to his critics without indicating the source of his information: that is, the then highly secret flights of American U–2 reconnaisance ("spy") planes over Soviet missile installations had revealed that the Russians were not achieving an operational capability in ICBM's as quickly as their early successes in long-range missile tests indicated they might. If so, this information was a well-kept secret, because the anxiety expressed within certain government circles—especially in the Air Force—kept the missile gap issue very much alive. Even after the U–2 flights were revealed (in May 1960, the Russians downed a reconnaisance plane, trapped the American government in an embarrassing lie, and scuttled the Paris summit conference), no government official so much as hinted that there was, indeed, evidence from previous U–2 flights that the Russian ICBM program was floundering.

The Democrats entered the 1960 presidential campaign with what they thought was a real issue. And when President John F. Kennedy took office in January 1961, he moved swiftly to accelerate the mis-

[23] U.S. Congress, Senate, Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, *Inquiry into Satellite and Missile Programs*, 85th Cong., 2d. Sess., 1958, Part 3, p. 2414.

sile programs then under way, as though to confirm the danger of an impending gap. However, within the first few months of the new Democratic Administration, the Defense Department began discounting the missile gap thesis, leading one mystified and annoyed Democratic Senator—who had done much to publicize the missile gap thesis—to ask, "What Happened to the Missile Gap?"[24]

[24] Stuart Symington, "What Happened to the Missile Gap?", *The Reporter*, February 15, 1962, p. 21–23.

CHAPTER 6

Extending the Military Options

Nuclear Power and Political Influence

When President Kennedy took office in January 1961, the power and position of the United States in world politics appeared to be in jeopardy. In spite of America's obvious military strength, her government had encountered great difficulty in translating military might into political dividends. Overwhelming nuclear power could not deter Soviet advances in comparable technology. Neither massive nor selective retaliatory threats had contained the revolutionary forces that were disrupting the politics of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. From outer space to Cuba, U.S. leadership had been challenged—and in many respects found wanting.

An adequate assessment of the complex forces that account for the problems of the 1960's cannot be attempted in a work confined to a description and analysis of salient aspects of nuclear deterrence strategies in American foreign policy. It is important to state, however, that nuclear weapons themselves exemplify only *one* of the difficulties. Weapons technology represents one of many revolutions that confound contemporary politics. The United States has hoped in vain that its technological excellence could be converted into national safety. Instead it has compounded the dangers.

One of the great ironies of the Eisenhower Administration is that its nuclear weapons policies, upon which it laid such great stress, failed to inspire the intended confidence and political flexibility either at home or among the allies abroad. The sense of uneasiness about America's power, status, indeed, its reliability, was evident in the rising anxieties expressed by critics in domestic politics, by allied governments, and in the growing dissensions within the Western alliance systems. The Soviet Union skillfully played on the fears of nuclear war that existed among all governments, boastfully proclaiming her missile strength. Many governments, whether allied with the United States or not, relied upon the American government to keep the peace. They instinctively feared Soviet aggressiveness. But they seemed even more disturbed by what had come to be called American "brinkmanship"—the willingness proclaimed by the American

Secretary of State to go to the brink of war in order to deter Communist aggression. In much of the non-Communist world a dual standard seemed to be in operation. When the Soviet Union made demands upon the West, many seemed to believe that it was America's responsibility to avoid conflict by making concessions that would avert a nuclear confrontation. By emphasizing nuclear diplomacy so prominently, the American government heightened the fear of nuclear war among friend and foe alike. After 1957, friends of the United States grew increasingly anxious about her capacity to keep the peace through nuclear deterrence in view of the so-called missile gap. By 1960, many believed that the United States would soon be outclassed by the growing strength of the Soviet Union. As a result, there was an evident loss of confidence in the ability of the United States to exercise global leadership.

The Kennedy Resolve

President Kennedy came into office pledged to recoup America's prestige, to overcome the alleged missile gap, and to exert imaginative and vigorous political leadership in world politics. His inaugural address alluded to the challenges and dangers of the 1960's:

> Only with complete dedication by us all to the national interest can we bring our country through the troubled years that lie ahead. Our problems are critical. The tide is unfavorable. The news will be worse before it is better. And while hoping and working for the best, we should prepare ourselves now for the worst. . . . There will be further setbacks before the tide is turned. But turn it we must.[1]

Ten days later in his State of the Union message, the President announced that he had initiated a reappraisal of the entire defense strategy of the United States. Robert S. McNamara, new Secretary of Defense, undertook the task of surveying America's defense posture. He moved, with what later came to be recognized as characteristic swiftness and authority, to achieve two immediate goals. First, with rapid adjustments in the defense program inherited from the previous administration, he set in motion a series of "quick fixes" that would accelerate missile production, reduce the vulnerability of strategic weapons systems, and add measurably to America's overall combat strength; second, McNamara undertook a review of the fundamental strategic options open to the United States—especially

[1] President John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address*, January 20, 1961.

general war options—in order to relate the defense program to a clearly defined military strategy.

McNamara's "quick fix" adjustments added $1.5 billion to the proposed Eisenhower defense budget. He recommended doubling the production rate for the new Minuteman ICBM, placing one half of the Strategic Air Command's bombers on fifteen-minute ground alert, increasing SAC's airborne alert capability during crisis, accelerating the Polaris submarine program—including the addition of ten boats to the planned force—and improving the command and control system for the strategic nuclear forces.[2]

General War Options

The review of fundamental strategic options was reduced to three essential general war policy alternatives: (1) "minimum" or "finite" deterrence; (2) "optimum mix" or "full" counterforce; and (3) "limited" counterforce or "flexible response."[3]

Advocates of the minimum deterrence option favored a small, invulnerable retaliatory missile force targeted on Russian cities. The favorite weapons system for performing this role was the Polaris missile submarine. The finite counter-city threat was thought to constitute a fully effective deterrent that assured the Soviet Union that any attack it initiated would automatically invoke unacceptable damage in return. Advocates of this option discounted the significance of numerical superiority, or even parity, in strategic weapons systems because the *invulnerability* of the finite system guaranteed sufficient strike-back power to destroy the enemy's most important value—its population. They also argued that the adoption of a minimum deterrent posture would have additional side benefits—they claimed that it would act as a brake on the strategic weapons arms race, that it would be less provocative than other postures, and that it would reduce to a minimum the economic burdens of defense.

The second strategic option—the optimum mix or full counterforce strategy—required overwhelmingly superior nuclear forces capable of delivering a crushing blow against the Soviet Union's military installations and population. It was never clear how this objective could be carried out or what kind of forces were necessary for it.

[2] These adjustments are summarized in William W. Kaufmann, *The McNamara Strategy*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 53–55.

[3] Harland B. Moulton, "The McNamara General War Strategy," *Orbis*, VIII (Summer, 1964), p. 238.

Presumably, a full mixture of manned bombers, ballistic missiles, and missile submarines would provide the "optimum" combination that could assure the complete destruction of Soviet society if war came. As a military policy its only objective, and a disastrously simple one, appeared to be, as Kaufmann has noted, to make sure ". . . that in a war more Russians than Americans ended up dead."[4]

The Eisenhower Administration had been attracted by both of these strategies and had adopted something of a mixture of the two. Numerical superiority, per se, had been abandoned as an objective, but the capacity to inflict some counterforce damage was not. However, the Eisenhower approach endorsed the "spasm warfare" retaliatory reaction that is basic to the finite deterrent threat because of a belief that the threat of an *automatic* and *devastating* response reinforced the deterrent. Both cities and military installations were targeted with a view to one great knock-out blow in the event of war.

The third alternative, and the one chosen by the Kennedy Administration, has been called the strategy of "flexible response." It was a limited counterforce posture not substantially different in general make-up from that of the previous Administration, except that numerical superiority in missiles remained a central objective. It was a *limited* posture in the sense that rising costs and diminishing military returns were assumed to exist that made full counterforce objectives unrealistic. The key to the new strategy, however, and its essential departure from the Eisenhower strategy, lies in the planned character of *responses* that were to be built into the system. Instead of assuming that a failure in deterrence would require an automatic, all-out retaliatory blow, the new approach would place a number of retaliatory options in the hands of the President so that responses to attacks could be rational, deliberate, and controlled.

The controlled response posture was based on the fact that in spite of all effort to deter a rational foe, deterrence could nevertheless fail. In that event, the United States needed to be prepared to respond in accordance with the conditions it faced. If deterrence fails, only a counterforce response makes sense, because to strike only at cities is to ignore totally the targets that can damage the United States—bomber and missile sites. In short, McNamara built into the system the capacity to use force rationally by retaining means to fight wars of different types and dimensions, *including* central exchanges of nuclear weapons, if such a course was ever provoked by

[4] Kaufmann, p. 51.

Russian aggression. In connection with this last point, McNamara contended that unless the nation had the capacity to fight a strategic nuclear war in a way that minimized damage to the United States by crippling Russia's means of conducting the war, the Soviet leadership would have an incentive to employ nuclear blackmail tactics. Russia might threaten nuclear war on the assumption that the West might prefer to back down instead of choosing a suicidal course of action.

In a general declaration of the new Administration's approach, Secretary McNamara emphasized its central feature—a second-strike capability:

> In this age of nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles, the ability to deter rests heavily on the existence of a force which can weather or survive a massive nuclear attack, even with little or no warning, in sufficient strength to strike a decisive counterblow. This force must be of a character which will permit its use, in the event of an attack, in a deliberate fashion and always under the complete control of the constituted authority.[5]

This emphasis on retaining a capacity for controlled and selective response was fundamental to the new strategy adopted by the Kennedy Administration. In his first military budget message to Congress, the President stated the rationale for choosing a "flexible response" as opposed to the inherited posture of "spasm" response in terms of his own constitutional responsibility to *make* these decisions:

> The basic decisions on our participation in any conflict and our response to any threat—including all decisions relating to the use of nuclear weapons, or the escalation of a small war into a large one—will be made by the regularly constituted civilian authorities. This requires effective and protected organizations, procedures, facilities, and communication . . . as well as defensive measures designed to insure thoughtful and selective decisions by civilian authorities.[6]

The strategy of flexible response was applied to the entire military apparatus. It was not confined to general war capabilities. But because of the urgency implied by the alleged missile gap, the Administration had to move initially to alleviate the dangers inherent in

[5] U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *Military Posture Briefings* [No. 9], 87th Cong., 1st Sess., 1961, p. 634.

[6] U.S. Congress, House, Doc. No. 123, *Recommendations Relating to Our Defense Budget—Message of the President of the United States*, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., 1961, p. 3.

Soviet missile superiority. At the same time, efforts were made to improve America's war-making capabilities across the board. During the new Administration's first few months "quick fixes" were applied to increase the strength of the "special forces" to improve readiness in counter-insurgency warfare. The Marine Corps was strengthened and air and sea-lift expanded. Beyond this the Administration was disposed to reorient the armed forces so that they would be better equipped to fight conventional and nuclear wars at any level of conflict.

The Berlin Crisis, 1961

The pressure of international events did not slacken, as Kennedy himself had predicted in his inaugural address. In Southeast Asia the Laotian crisis had reached dangerous proportions within weeks after Kennedy assumed the Presidency. The Administration made the mistake of overreacting and found its position lacking support from among the SEATO members. In the meantime, the ill-founded program to sponsor an invasion of Cuba by CIA-trained Cuban refugees was moving inexorably towards its dramatic and astonishingly inept conclusion. On April 17, the attack was launched in the Bay of Pigs and failed so drastically that American prestige, power, and will were compromised seriously.[7]

In view of the apparent weakness, perhaps even indecisiveness of American leadership in the Laotian crisis and the Cuban affair, it was perhaps inevitable that the Soviet Union would renew its pressure upon Berlin. President Kennedy wanted to meet with the Soviet Premier to state resolutely that, in spite of America's actions in Laos and Cuba, the Russians would miscalculate if they assumed that the United States would bow to Soviet pressures in Berlin or on other matters vital to American and Western interests.

On the eve of the President's trip to Vienna, where he was to confront the Russian leader for the first time, Kennedy delivered what sounded like a second State of the Union message, urging Congress

[7] The President is reported to have felt "desperately short of usable military resources" at that time. The crisis in Laos and the Cuban invasion dates converged. "Thus, he faced the dilemma that if he committed American forces to Laos, he might have no reserves left for Cuba; and if he became involved in Cuba, he would have nothing remaining for action in Laos. The Chiefs of Staff, reportedly, heightened the dilemma by stressing that a move into Laos would require as many as twenty divisions or the limited use of nuclear weapons." Kaufmann, p. 269.

to improve the tactical power of the Army, to enhance the readiness of the reserves, to create more counter-insurgency forces, to increase the size of the Marine Corps, and to begin a long-range program for civil defense. The President obviously wanted to strengthen his hand. He declared that American retaliatory power was sufficient to deter any rational adversary. But miscalculation was another matter: "It is on this basis," the President declared, "that civil defense can readily be justified—as insurance for the civilian population in the event of such a miscalculation."[8] The President made the trip to Vienna to prevent a miscalculation by Soviet leadership.

Khrushchev perhaps was not as impressed by Kennedy's words as he was by the action (or inaction) of the new American Administration. He told the President that the Berlin question would have to be resolved by the end of the year or that the Soviet Union would sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany, making Western access and position in West Berlin dependent on negotiated agreements with the East German regime. Obviously, the Russians were trying to play upon American weakness to force the resolution of one of its most disagreeable problems. The summit conference had precipitated the very crisis that Kennedy sought to avoid.

It had already become evident in the spring of 1961 that the United States did not have sufficient military manpower to deal effectively with world problems. The threat in Berlin forced the President to realize how inflexible his options were and how little time was left to develop them. He decided to resort to a short-term partial mobilization and to a commitment to a long-term build-up of conventional and other "general purpose" forces.

The President reported his decision to call up some reserves in a major address to the nation:

> . . . We need the capability of placing in any critical area at the appropriate time a force which, combined with our allies, is large enough to make clear our determination and our ability to defend our rights at all costs and to meet all levels of aggressor pressure with whatever force levels are required.

The President made this decision, he said, because "we need to have a wider choice than humiliation or all-out nuclear action."[9] He also needed evidence of American determination. The partial mobilization was intended to do just that.

[8] President John F. Kennedy, "Urgent National Needs," address to joint session of Congress, May 25, 1961.

[9] President John F. Kennedy, "The Berlin Crisis: Report to the Nation," July 25, 1961.

Nearly all immediate military responses to the Berlin crisis were *non-nuclear,* a clear departure from the Eisenhower approach. The Army's strength was increased from 875,000 to one million men; its three training divisions were replenished and transformed into combat divisions; two National Guard divisions were called to active duty; scores of ships were added to the active naval fleet; and Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve squadrons were activated. The Air Force moved 16 tactical fighter squadrons to Europe. The Army sent 40,000 additional ground troops to strengthen the Seventh Army in Europe plus the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment to provide additional reserve support. Kennedy had used the tension of the Berlin crisis to build up quickly what he regarded as the badly needed conventional power that could augment the nuclear deterrent. It was a show of force to demonstrate to Khrushchev that the United States was not bluffing, and a "quick fix" effort to improve conventional strength if needed in Europe or elsewhere.

How American military strength was to be used in the Berlin crisis itself, however, was never specified. In terms of the Russians' threat to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany, neither nuclear nor conventional military strength had any direct bearing. But perhaps the Russians or East Germans might try to isolate the American military garrison in West Berlin or attempt another blockade of the city. The United States wanted to show that it was prepared to respond, not by threatening nuclear reprisal, which remained, as usual, incredible as an immediate response, but with local military power. Indeed, McNamara cautiously suggested that the American controlled response posture might lead to escalatory measures. American policy was designed to "expand the range of military alternatives available to the President" with respect to Berlin, because, said McNamara, "even in limited war situations we should not preclude the use of tactical nuclear weapons, for no one can foresee how such situations might develop."[10]

The local military power the Administration had in mind was presumably to be readied for, among other possibilities, an "Autobahn probe" in the event that the Soviet Union blockaded Berlin or took other actions in the city for which military relief forces might be required. Against such non-nuclear initiative by NATO forces it was felt that the Soviet Union would back down instead of risking the escalatory consequences to which McNamara referred. In short, the

[10] Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, July 27, 1961, as quoted by Kaufmann, *The McNamara Strategy,* p. 67.

West's nuclear strength in reserve presumably allowed some experimentation with non-nuclear options if NATO developed such capabilities. It also suggested that the United States quite probably expected the Soviets to attempt another blockade of Berlin.[11]

When the Soviet move came, however, its form took the United States by complete surprise. At 1:00 A.M. on August 13, the Communists, with great swiftness, completely sealed off East Berlin. A barbed-wire fence was set up, followed by the construction of a concrete wall—the notorious Berlin Wall. The Berlin "escape hatch" was closed tight and sealed. The United States reacted with "firmness" and "resolution," but it did not knock down the wall. The danger of a military explosion was great. With some circumspection the United States moved, instead, to reaffirm its rights in Berlin. Fifteen hundred troops were sent to the city. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson and General Lucius Clay were sent to reassure the Berliners. Ultimately, the President himself was to come to the city to gaze across the infamous wall and declare to an enthusiastic crowd: *"Ich bin ein Berliner!"*

The wall remained, and so did the United States. Under pressure the Administration did not back down nor did it push forward. A deadlock existed. However, the United States had allowed a subtle change in status: West Berlin was protected, but the future of East Berlin had been unilaterally determined by the construction of the Berlin Wall. In this sense, it was a setback for American policy—Berlin could no longer serve as the symbol of the quest for a united Germany. The eastern sector of the city had been irretrievably lost.[12] Both the United States and the Soviet Union, tense over Berlin, rearmed and headed toward a more dangerous confrontation. The Russians broke the tacit nuclear test ban agreement and announced the explosion of a "supermegaton" bomb. Americans were urged to construct fallout shelters. The Kennedy Administration had quietly put the "missile gap" to rest and spoke instead of our overwhelming superiority: "The destructive power which the United States could bring to bear even after a Soviet surprise attack upon our forces," a Defense Department spokesman declared, "would be as great—perhaps greater than—the total undamaged force which the enemy can

[11] For an informed discussion of Autobahn probe plans, see Jack M. Schick, "The Berlin Crisis of 1961 and U.S. Military Strategy," *Orbis*, VIII (Winter 1965), pp. 819–21.

[12] For a full discussion of these implications see, ibid., pp. 816–31.

threaten to launch against the United States in a first strike."[13] The Administration spoke of "tens of thousands" of nuclear delivery vehicles and many more warheads. The United States had regained confidence in its second strike capability, but it could not allow the Soviet Union to make relative gains in nuclear technology. President Kennedy ordered a renewal of the nuclear testing program.

The Cuban Missile Crisis

It has been said that the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 was the world's first nuclear confrontation. In the clash between the United States and the Soviet Union over the placement of Soviet rockets on Cuban soil, the two nuclear giants for the first time faced each other directly on an issue dealing precisely with nuclear weapons. This had not happened in Korea, in Indochina, in the Formosan Straits, in Lebanon, or in Laos. These were crises in which the Soviet Union was only indirectly involved. It had not happened over NATO, or the division of Germany, or Berlin itself—both sides referred to their nuclear deterrents, but they were not specifically invoked. It is true that Eisenhower relied upon the nuclear deterrent to reinforce the American position in Berlin during Russian pressures from 1958 to 1960 to force Western concessions. But it is odd, as Kaufmann notes,[14] that Khrushchev did not attempt to test vigorously that strategy as applied to Berlin. It hardly seems plausible that President Eisenhower would have launched a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union in response to anything short of a seizure of the city and annihilation of the Western military garrisons there. Berlin is, after all, a particularly vulnerable point for the West; there, the allied powers can be harassed or their rights contested without the East Germans or Russians resorting to force.

Secretary of Defense McNamara has stated his belief that the Cuban missile crisis and the Soviet objectives in Berlin were directly related. They represented "the trump card," he said, "which Mr. Khrushchev intended to play in the next round of negotiations on the status of Berlin."[15] Whatever the motivation and objective, "the

[13] Address by Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell L. Gilpatric before the Business Council at Hot Springs, Virginia, October 21, 1961.

[14] Kaufmann, pp. 256–57.

[15] U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on Military Posture*, 88th Cong., 1st Sess., 1963, p. 300.

trump card" represented a dramatic and aggressive gamble, one of the most audacious moves in the history of international diplomacy. And it came near to precipitating a war between two nuclear powers.

The crisis began indirectly in the spring of 1962. Refugees, in increasing numbers, were reporting the existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba. The Administration tended to discount those reports, because they appeared to refer to antiaircraft missiles. Government spokesmen wrestled awkwardly with distinctions between "offensive" and "defensive" weapons. The President stated that the United States would not tolerate the introduction of "offensive" military weapons in Cuba, but admitted, by implication, that there was little the United States could do about "defensive" weapons.

In July 1962, Raul Castro visited Moscow and at the end of August Ernesto (Che) Guevara concluded an arms agreement with the Russians, announced by Tass on September 2.[16] American intelligence sources confirmed the existence of Soviet military aid during the summer and into September but found no evidence of missiles other than air defense types. President Kennedy stated to the press on September 4 that

> There is no evidence . . . of the presence of offensive ground-to-ground missiles; or of other significant offensive capability either in Cuban hands or under Soviet direction and guidance. Were it otherwise, the gravest issues would arise.[17]

American intelligence authorities were, of course, wary. Surveillance of the island was ordered increased, but complications and bad weather hampered the operations. Photographic confirmation of hasty activity to install ballistic missiles finally came on October 14. This news set into action the now well-publicized process by which President Kennedy, together with selected top advisers, devised a plan to "quarantine" Cuba and force a withdrawal of the Russian missiles.

The President revealed the Cuban missile threat and the American government's response to it on the evening of October 22 in a nationwide radio and television address.[18] After describing the clear evidence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, the President went on to point out the methods by which the Soviet government had attempted to deceive the American government. He then announced the "initial"

[16] See "Documents Relating to the Missile Crisis, October, 1962," in Henry M. Pachter, *Collision Course* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), pp. 175 ff; this work also contains a useful chronology of the crisis.

[17] Ibid., p. 176.

[18] Ibid., pp. 192–97.

steps that had been ordered, which included "a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba" and further surveillance of the Cuban island. Finally, he announced a pointed and specific nuclear warning: "It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union."[19]

The United States had, in the nick of time, detected the Soviet challenge, prevented a fait accompli, and undertaken a vigorous and imaginative counter-move that undoubtedly caught the Russians off guard. Moreover, unlike many crises in which the United States has become embroiled in the past twenty years, this was a crisis close to home and one in which local and strategic military advantage was clearly on the American side. The U.S. military forces were already on alert, moving into position. The Army was prepared to send in an invasion force of more than one hundred thousand men; the Strategic Air Command had dispersed its bombers and brought its forces to a full-scale alert; tactical air force squadrons were concentrated in the southeastern United States; the Navy had 180 ships involved in the operations; and ten battalions of Marines were afloat in preparation for commitment.[20] This time, as opposed to the Laotian crisis, the Bay of Pigs, and the Berlin crisis of 1961, "multiple options with a vengeance stood ready at the President's hand."[21]

During the hectic week that followed, the United States poised its forces to strike Cuba. However, American moves were slow and deliberate. Confrontation with Soviet ships was delayed. It was apparent that the President was trying to preserve time so that pressure could be exerted slowly but unmistakably, and without excessive provocation or hasty action. After a tense and curious[22] week of diplomacy under pressure, Khrushchev relented, stating in a letter to the President (broadcast by Moscow radio on October 28) that the construction of the missile sites would be discontinued, the weapons dismantled, crated, and returned to the Soviet Union.

The American deterrent threats had succeeded in checking a seri-

[19] Ibid., p. 195.

[20] See Kaufmann, pp. 271–72; also Pachter, p. 56.

[21] Kaufmann, p. 272.

[22] Secret unofficial discussions between an American reporter and a Soviet agent are reported to have been a key channel of communication between Kennedy and Khrushchev; see, Roger Hilsman, "The Cuban Crisis: How Close We Were to War," *Look*, August 25, 1964, pp. 17–21.

ously provocative Soviet move. By a measured and carefully orchestrated response, the United States had skillfully outmaneuvered the Soviet Union in the most dangerous of all games—nuclear diplomacy. But apart from the skill with which the Kennedy Administration operated during that fateful crisis, it is obvious that the United States had an inherent military advantage: by October 1962, the missile gap had been exploded as a myth—the United States possessed a clear lead in ICBM's and an overwhelming lead in long-range bomber forces. And in terms of local military strength, the advantage was even more heavily weighted in favor of the United States, because only the Cuban armed forces stood ready to oppose an American invasion and/or tactical air strike. The Soviet Union did not have the means to offer a local counter-threat.

The Russians had gambled and lost. In less than two years the Kennedy Administration had restored American prestige in a moment of danger and high drama and had underscored the credibility of the nuclear deterrent strategy when the stakes were high.

However, it remains to be seen how far the deterrent can be credibly stretched, whether the underlying philosophy be massive retaliation, graduated retaliation, or controlled response. This was the challenge to which McNamara was to turn his energies and talents. It was a problem that no previous American administration had resolved successfully. Under Kennedy and later under Johnson, the effort was to continue but the results cannot yet be measured meaningfully.

Expanding the Spectrum of Deterrence

The military policies of the Kennedy Administration were aimed at achieving a credible and fully destructive second-strike nuclear capability in order to deter a Soviet strategic attack on the United States and its major allies, and, by the same means, to fight a war (in the event the deterrent failed) designed to limit the Soviet capacity to damage the West. Inducements to avoid the destruction of cities and quick termination of the war were included. At the same time, the United States wanted to build up balanced defense forces against less drastic contingencies to maintain a complementary deterrent-defensive capability below the level of general or central war. Secretary of Defense McNamara had in mind constructing forces that could provide a range of "options," conventional and nuclear, so that "we will . . . be in a position of being able to choose, coolly and deliberately, the level and kind of response we feel most appropriate

in our own best interests, and both our enemies and friends will know it."[23]

Secretary McNamara believed that "nuclear and non-nuclear power complement each other . . . just as together they complement the non-military instruments of policy." He argued that by ". . . achieving the best balance of military capabilities—over the entire range of potential conflict" the United States would ". . . by improving and expanding the alternatives open to the Free World, reduce the pressures to make concessions in the face of Soviet threats."

McNamara had in mind large-scale non-nuclear warfare capabilities, particularly for the armed forces of NATO, but he also aimed at developing American military power that could cope with guerrilla warfare:

> It is tempting to conclude that our conventional forces will leave us free to compete with communism in the peaceful sphere of economic and social development, where we can compete most effectively.
>
> But we shall have to deal with the problems of 'wars of liberation.' . . . In these conflicts, the force of world communism operates in the twilight zone between political subversion and quasi-military action. . . . Their political tactics are terror, extortion, and assassination. We must help the people of threatened nations to resist these tactics by appropriate means. You cannot carry out land reform programs if the local peasant leaders are being systematically murdered.[24]

The Secretary of Defense had in mind the type of conflict then raging in South Vietnam, a conflict into which the United States, partly as a result of the Defense Department's increased effort to cope with guerrilla wars with new weapons and doctrines of counter-insurgency, stepped up the American commitment in order to demonstrate that "indirect aggression" in support of wars of liberation would not succeed. It appears, at this writing, to have been a fateful turn in American military policy, one that led the United States into deep involvement in a civil war in South Vietnam and an escalatory adventure against North Vietnam in an effort to stop "indirect aggression," and presumably by analogy, to deter other nations from undertaking similar courses of action.

The "McNamara Strategy" of multiple options as instruments for deterrence and defense across the total spectrum of potential conflict had an impressive inner logic. Its major premise was that military

[23] Robert S. McNamara, Address Before the Fellows of the American Bar Association, Chicago, February 17, 1962; quoted at length in Kaufmann, pp. 73–77.

[24] Ibid., pp. 76–77.

power remained a viable and key instrument of national policy, and its outlook was optimistic: the multiple-option deterrence program would succeed, especially in those contingencies where the Dulles massive retaliation formula had failed—the low-level, non-nuclear challenges for which nuclear retaliation had little relevance.

Did the McNamara strategy succeed? We are too close to the events and issues surrounding this question to provide more than a preliminary answer. For purposes of surveying the early returns from current defense policies, three major categories should be kept in mind: (1) central war policy; (2) NATO policy; and (3) local and guerrilla warfare policy.

Deterring Central War

The physical dimensions of the retaliatory forces of the United States are impressive. In June 1965, the last of 800 Minuteman ICBM's became operational. By June 1967 the complete fleet of 41 Polaris missile submarines will be on station, carrying a total complex of 656 missiles. The total number of long-range missiles scheduled to be operational in 1966 exceeds 1,700.[25] In addition, the United States plans to retain one third of its B–52 long-range bomber force of 630 aircraft beyond 1971 while slowly phasing out its B–58 supersonic bombers. These are just the major nuclear delivery systems. The missiles are relatively invulnerable to simultaneous surprise destruction, protected by concrete underground silos or dispersed beneath the oceans of the world. The strategic bomber force is more vulnerable, of course. Half of the force is kept on a fifteen-minute runway alert and a large percentage can be maintained on airborne alert during crisis periods.

These retaliatory forces are designed for second-strike missions. Secretary McNamara has reiterated that "there is no question but that today our strategic retaliatory forces are fully capable of destroying the Soviet target system, even after absorbing an initial surprise attack."[26] The current mission of the strategic retaliatory forces is, according to Secretary McNamara, "to serve as a maximum deterrent to nuclear war" by remaining ". . . visibly capable of fully destroying the Soviet society under all conditions of retaliation. In addition, in the event that such a war is forced upon us, they should have the

[25] Moulton, p. 250.

[26] U.S. Congress, House Subcommittee on Department of Defense Appropriations of the Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965*, 88th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1964, Part 4, p. 28 (cited hereafter as: Hearings, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965*).

power to limit the destruction of our own cities and population to the maximum extent practicable."[27]

There are three objectives in this type of deterrent posture. The first is that deterrence might fail no matter what the United States does, in which event the United States must be prepared to implement her threat with a military strike designed not solely to punish the aggressor but to defeat him. Such a strike must not simply inflict "unacceptable" damage on the enemy, but must blunt, and finally eliminate his capacity to make war against the United States.

The second objective is to limit as much as possible the enemy's capacity to inflict damage on the United States and her allies. This goal implies, as does the first, that the adversary's missiles and bomber bases are the primary targets. The third objective of the strategic forces posture is to provide the enemy with strong incentives to avoid the deliberate destruction of American cities. This is presumably to be accomplished by announcing, as Secretary McNamara has done, a "no-cities" doctrine that holds enemy cities as hostages to be destroyed only in retaliation for attacks upon American cities. This explains why the Defense Department has promoted a nationwide fallout shelter program (no matter what our strategic forces do, some enemy missiles and bombers are likely to get through—but, hopefully, to attack military targets rather than cities).[28] However, McNamara tended to revise his estimate in 1965, stating that it was "unlikely" that the Soviet Union would limit itself to a "no-cities" attack.[29] Thus, McNamara himself is coming to doubt the efficacy of the damage-limiting function of U.S. strategic forces.

Each of these objectives prescribes a counterforce strategy as a complement to the deterrent effort. That is, if the deterrent fails at the strategic level, the primary objective of strategic forces is to destroy the Soviet Union's long-range weapons. However, if the United States is firmly committed to a second-strike policy, can we realistically expect to destroy anything more than empty missile pads and aircraft runways?[30] This question has often been raised by critics of counterforce strategy. Secretary McNamara argues that:

[27] Ibid., p. 26.

[28] These three points are similarly described by Moulton, pp. 238–39.

[29] Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, February 18, 1965; partial text in the *New York Times,* February 19, 1965, p. 10.

[30] There are, of course, situations that might arise in which the United States would strike first. For example, if the Soviet Union launched a major attack against Western Europe *without* a simultaneous strike against the United States, our retaliatory forces would have a better chance of taking out a large number of unexpended Soviet strategic weapons. But for that very reason a separate attack against Western Europe is very unlikely.

It is quite likely that the Soviet Union, in an attack upon the United States and Western Europe, would not fire all its strategic nuclear weapons in a "salvo launch." Regardless of whether the Soviets struck first at our cities or first at our military installations or at both simultaneously, it is probable that the launching of their bombers and missiles would extend over a sufficient period of time for us to receive the first blow, to strike back not only at Soviet cities, if that be our choice, but also at the elements of their forces that had not yet been launched.[31]

On the other hand, Secretary McNamara readily admits that the Soviet Union is hardening and dispersing its strategic nuclear forces, so that ". . . as time goes on . . . it will be increasingly difficult to destroy a substantial portion of the residual forces."[32] Apparently the counterforce design involves an irreversably diminishing set of returns as the Soviet Union achieves an increasingly invulnerable strike force. Even if we were to double or triple our retaliatory forces, we would have the same problem, according to McNamara. In short, he remains committed to a limited counterforce strategy because it provides *some* damage-limiting capabilities and because it offers the enemy an incentive to adopt a "no-cities" attack plan. However, he now concedes that a "no-cities" attack is unlikely. Secretary McNamara does not offer much hope that his limited counterforce approach will accomplish very much more than the simpler countercity strategy, and the further one looks into the future, the less persuasive the counterforce arguments become. Once the adversary achieves a fully invulnerable force (in nuclear war this is a relative concept), the only hope for damage limitation lies in antimissile systems—the destruction of missiles after leaving their protected sites but before reaching their targets.

Hopefully, the futility of a mutually destructive central war will deter each side from ever launching its strategic nuclear forces. If neither side can destroy the major weapons of its opponent, then there is no rational military alternative—because an attack upon the population will only trigger one's own destruction. One detects in McNamara's testimony a hint of the inevitable acceptance of an ironic strategic symmetry—a balance of terror that dooms the quest for strategic nuclear supremacy as ultimately futile. Counterforce is simply becoming technically unfeasible.[33] One suspects, therefore,

[31] Hearings, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965*, Part 4, p. 26.
[32] Ibid.
[33] One always has to enter the caveat that sudden technological innovations can radically alter the equation—the achievement, for example, of a relatively effective anti-ballistic missile system by one side.

that the McNamara strategy is not only a *limited* counterforce strategy but also an *interim* counterforce strategy.

Other high officials of the American government agree with this hypothesis. McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, for example, has written that the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba ". . . signaled an acceptance by the Soviet Government, for the present, at least, of the existing nuclear balance." He added that in the current balance the United States has superiority, "but it is a superiority that does not permit any lack of respect for the Soviet Union. No safer balance appears possible at present. No overwhelmingly one-sided margin is open to *either* side. . . ."[34] President Johnson also has reflected this view in his public remarks on the subject. He has said that because you can kill 50 to 100 milion enemy lives and they can do the same to you, "general war is impossible and some alternatives are essential. . . ."[35]

The United States may be headed toward a central war deterrent that has basically finite deterrent characteristics. It may abandon the effort to remain meaningfully superior to the Soviet Union in strategic weapons. This is perhaps an inevitable consequence of current trends in military technology. It probably does not reflect the end of the arms race, but only a slackening, of the quantitative race for the present. Qualitative competition will surely continue. But it is ironic that the Administration that committed itself so vigorously to overcoming a "missile gap," supplanting it with a counterforce posture, seems inevitably headed for the same general war posture adopted by the Eisenhower Administration almost a decade before: sufficiency (except, of course, that the new sufficiency will be based upon multiple options rather than automatic retaliation).

NATO Strategy

The search for a wider number of choices that characterized the McNamara central war strategy also underlay the Kennedy Administration's approach to the military dilemmas of NATO. President Kennedy's statement at the beginning of the Berlin crisis in the summer of 1961—"we need to have a wider choice than humiliation or all-out action"—reflected the new Administration's concern and de-

[34] "The President and Peace," *Foreign Affairs*, XLII (April 1964), p. 362 (emphasis added).

[35] As quoted in the *New York Times*, March 25, 1964, p. 1.

sire to depart from the trip-wire nuclear retaliation strategy inherited from the previous Administration. NATO defense rested almost entirely upon nuclear weapons. American ground forces were armed with tactical atomic weapons, and allied forces had nuclear-capable weapons although the warheads remained under American control. Under General Lauris Norstad, NATO established ground forces strength goals on the central front at 30 active and 30 reserve divisions. In terms of conventional non-nuclear capabilities, General Norstad proposed that NATO be capable of enforcing a "pause" in the aggressive momentum of an allout Soviet assault on the central front so that the enemy's intentions might be tested *before* resorting to nuclear war, and so that the Soviets themselves might have the opportunity to reconsider.

The new Administration was convinced that NATO defenses relied too heavily on nuclear weapons. The old danger of a massive conventional assault had, in the view of many, given way to more subtle tactical dangers—what the military often characterized as "salami tactics"—attempts to slice away at Western rights and interests one piece at a time. These required local resistance. Moreover, one could never discount the possibility of an East German revolt, another blockade of Berlin, or a limited seizure of territory, contingencies for which the threatened use of tactical or strategic nuclear weapons would have neither significant deterrent effect nor relevant military effect in the event of combat.

From the beginning of the first big crisis in Europe, which occurred after he had taken office, President Kennedy and his Defense Secretary (who quite often spoke for the President) committed the United States to an enhanced conventional war policy. Many Europeans, believing in the mystique of nuclear deterrence, were alarmed by America's renewed emphasis on conventional arms. They argued that stress on conventional capabilities undermined the credibility of the nuclear threat. Moreover, many believed that the explanation for the new departure in American military policy lay in the increased vulnerability of American cities to Soviet attack. They suspected that the United States was reluctant to employ nuclear deterrence to protect NATO because of a growing fear for the consequences to the American people.

Such critics actually missed the point. They feared that the United States was subtly trying to renege on its nuclear pledge. In fact, the U.S. was attempting to reinforce that nuclear pledge with additional capabilities, capabilities that would offer the President more choices,

so that in every response to Soviet tactics he would not be tied to the two most dangerous options: nuclear war or acquiescence. Contrary to the concern in Europe that the U.S. was moving too far toward conventional capabilities, during the first two years of the Kennedy Administration the United States increased the number of tactical *nuclear* weapons in Europe by more than 60 percent.[36] The United States had not abandoned its nuclear options. It was adding other alternatives to complement what it already had.

Secretary McNamara undertook a vigorous campaign to overcome the reluctance among NATO allies to accept the new Kennedy approach to NATO defense problems. He was never more than partially successful. He could not, for example, understand why the size of Soviet conventional power was a source of alarm, while American efforts to increase comparable capabilities in the West were criticized as weakening the deterrent. In order to argue that increased conventional capabilities did not detract from the overall deterrent, McNamara cited the Soviet forces, saying, "I do not place any less credence in their deterrent because they have maintained their conventional forces and, as a mater of fact, reversed a plan to reduce those forces."[37]

In May 1962, McNamara traveled to the NATO meeting in Athens to attempt to point out the problems and prospects for defense of the region. From all reports the NATO ministers were impressed by his performance. On June 16, the Secretary delivered a commencement address at the University of Michigan that is generally conceded to be a declassified version of the Athens speech. One of McNamara's central points was an argument against independent nuclear strategies within the Alliance. "We are convinced," he said, "that a general nuclear war target system is indivisible. . . ." He stressed America's nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union, even as a second-strike proposition, and argued that the Europeans would be mistaken to see their defense as separate from that of the United States. "We know that the same forces which are targeted on ourselves are also targeted on our allies. Our retaliatory forces are prepared to respond against these forces, wherever they are and whatever their targets. . . . The character of nuclear war compels it."[38]

[36] Kaufmann, p. 124.

[37] U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, 88th Cong., 1st Sess., Part I, p. 223.

[38] Robert S. McNamara, Commencement Address, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, June 16, 1962.

McNamara was saying to Europe what he had been telling the American people: insofar as nuclear deterrence is concerned, we believe that our nuclear forces are sufficient to deter any rational decision to attack us, but in the event that war does occur, we are prepared to fight a nuclear war that will limit the damage to us while at the same time incapacitating the enemy. For NATO this concept of nuclear war took on its most dramatic "no-cities" statement:

> The U.S. has come to the conclusion that to the extent feasible, basic military strategy in a possible nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. That is to say, principal military objectives . . . should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces, not his civilian population.

By this means, McNamara asserted, "we are giving a possible opponent the strongest imaginable incentive to refrain from striking our own cities."[39]

Turning to conventional forces in NATO, Secretary McNamara admitted that the Soviet Union had superior numbers, "but that superiority is by no means overwhelming." Indeed, later tallies of Soviet ground strength altered America's evaluation radically. In the spring of 1962, however, McNamara argued that the members of NATO collectively had the means to establish an effective non-nuclear defense that would complement the Alliance's deterrent strength by assuring that "no aggression, small or large, can succeed."[40]

Secretary McNamara was attempting to provide NATO with the same global outlook and the acceptance of the same fundamental military policies that the United States had adopted. However, international politics are even more complicated in some respects than domestic. The response within the United States to McNamara's defense policies remains mixed. But in Europe, two members of NATO who are nominal nuclear powers were sensitive to the means by which nuclear policy was to be centralized. The remainder were concerned about the American demand for increased emphasis on conventional strength. Both issues remain unresolved, in spite of McNamara's consistent efforts.

The United States has increased the power and mobility of its "general purpose forces," including a slight strengthening of its forces in NATO and the prepositioning of two more divisions of military

[39] Ibid. Again, note that by 1965 McNamara was less sure that the Soviet Union would refrain from striking U.S. cities. See above, p. 111.

[40] Ibid.

equipment. The latter step presumably enables the United States to add two more divisions to the NATO line in the time it takes to fly the men to the equipment. But the British and the French, for different reasons, have been upset by American nuclear policy and have been unwilling to increase their own commitments of non-nuclear strength to NATO. Also other members are not entirely convinced of the necessity or relevancy of non-nuclear forces. Europeans seem to fluctuate between two assumptions: that the threat to their security from the Soviet Union is no longer basically a military one, and that any war with Russia will be a nuclear war in which conventional forces will not determine the outcome.

The two basic issues that American military policy in relation to the NATO Alliance has attempted to resolve—control over nuclear weapons (the nuclear deterrence function) and viable non-nuclear defense capabilities (the capacity to deny conquests by conventional means)—have not, as of this writing, had their intended effect. Some members of the alliance disagree with the United States on both accounts. The United States offered to share the responsibility for centralized control over nuclear weapons through the instrumentality of a Multi-lateral Force (MLF). The MLF was to consist of twenty-five surface ships armed with Polaris nuclear-armed missiles and manned by multinational crews representing the participating nations. The United States proposed to retain a veto over the decision to fire the weapons, but all participants were to have a voice in the nuclear policies of MLF. MLF's purposes were many: to provide a European deterrent force that counters the incentive for independent nuclear status and all the divisive influences such a course might have on the Alliance; to provide NATO with a medium-range ballistic missile force to supplant the tactical aircraft, which will become less and less able either to penetrate air defenses in central Europe or to counter the medium-range missiles in Russia; and to provide a credible nuclear deterrent to Soviet aggression in Europe in which the Europeans are themselves involved.

But MLF's problems were also many: (1) France took particular exception to the plan because it contradicted her policy of independent nuclear and political status; (2) many were alarmed by the potentially large role planned for Germany in MLF; (3) the British were never enthusiastic because they were embarrassed by the degree to which their "independent" nuclear status actually depended on the U.S.; (4) the policies reflected by the MLF proposal became entangled in the politics of the Common Market, where again DeGaulle's

objectives and methods ran contrary to the purposes of the United States; and finally, (5) many read into the MLF proposal a confirmation of their claim that the American nuclear deterrent was no longer reliable because of the vulnerability of American cities to Soviet blackmail—the fear being that the MLF plan was a method for releasing the United States from its commitment to retaliate in case of Russian attack upon Western Europe. In spite of diplomatic efforts from 1963 to 1965 to promote acceptance of the basic principles of MLF, by 1965 the Johnson Administration acknowledged its failure to gain any consensus and the plan was quietly shelved.

The controversy in NATO over the role of conventional forces continues unresolved. The recent American argument to persuade its European allies of the importance of non-nuclear tactics has been that a viable conventional defense of Europe is easily within reach. This is so, according to official American estimates, because (1) the strength of NATO has increased in recent years—particularly as a result of American efforts—and (2) the strength of Soviet ground forces has been consistently overstated. Secretary McNamara has attempted to rid the West of the "David and Goliath notions borrowed from 1949."[41] Although the usual index of Soviet ground strength has been put at approximately 175 divisions, McNamara stated that "recent intensive investigation has shown that the number of active Soviet divisions that are maintained at manning levels anywhere close to combat readiness is *less than half* of the 160–175 figure."[42]

The following exchange between Congressman Flood and Secretary of Defense McNamara during testimony on the defense budget on February 17, 1964, illuminates the issue:

> Mr. Flood: . . . a few years ago everybody who came here insisted the Russians had 150 divisions and made quite a point out of it. The next batch of witnesses . . . started to downgrade by saying, "Well, they had 150 divisions, but only X divisions are line divisions, Y divisions are cadres and noncoms and reserve officers, Z divisions are active reservists." Now, a third batch of witnesses come up . . . I have in mind Mr. Nitze when he was Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs . . . and a speech by Mr. Vance [Secretary of the Army], who said they had only 60 or 80 divisions. . . .
>
> Mr. McNamara: . . . As to the Soviet divisions, it is in part a problem of semantics. I suspect they probably do have between 150 and 175 divisions today. But what is a division? In some cases it is nothing more than a flag, or a flag and a cadre. . . .

[41] Robert S. McNamara, address before the Economic Club of New York, November 18, 1963; quoted at length in Kaufmann, pp. 301 ff.

[42] Ibid., p. 308 (emphasis added).

The Secretary of Defense went on to argue that the effect of the downgrading of Soviet strength would not undermine the incentive within NATO to meet force goals. "Quite the opposite," Mr. McNamara replied. Now that a realistic assessment of Soviet strength has been made, NATO force objectives become realistic; they ". . . appear to be a substantial defensive force, well worth striving for and capable of accomplishing its mission."[43]

The current position of the United States government appears to be that, in the words of Secretary McNamara,

> NATO forces (including our own) now deployed in Western Europe are more evenly matched with the Soviet bloc than has been commonly supposed. Indeed, with but relatively small increases in the current level of effort on the part of our European partners . . . the NATO forces in Western Europe could adequately deal with a wide range of possible Soviet aggressions, both with or without the use of nuclear weapons.[44]

In summary, the American position with respect to the defense of Western Europe (again, referring directly to Secretary McNamara's statements) is as follows:

> (1) The forces envisioned in NATO plans for the end of 1966, fully manned, equipped, and properly positioned, could hold an initial Soviet attack on the central front using nonnuclear means alone.
> (2) Until these requirements are met, the defense of Europe against an all-out Soviet attack, even if such an attack were limited to nonnuclear means, would require the use of tactical nuclear weapons on our part.
> (3) One of the most important reasons for having a conventional war capability in Europe arises not out of the remote prospect of a massive Soviet assault, but out of more likely and less violent contingencies such as might be related to Berlin. Under such circumstances, McNamara argues, "we should have the ability to make limited military moves without using nuclear weapons."[45]

Like the reception in Europe of the Multi-lateral Force plan, however, American efforts to induce renewed interest and increased *European* contributions to conventional forces have fallen upon skeptical and reluctant ears. The reasons for this are somewhat complicated. For one thing, the United States is urging Europeans to share the military burden more when many Europeans see less need for military expenditures today than in all previous years. NATO's success in enhancing Western Europe's security, combined with the

[43] Hearings, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965*, Part 4, pp. 58–59.
[44] Ibid., p. 20.
[45] Ibid., p. 196.

Soviet Union's relatively soft diplomatic approach in recent years, weakens the argument in favor of greater defense efforts. Moreover, the French suggest a military alternative that, in effect, challenges American leadership in NATO. Their goal is to counter American influence and reestablish the locus of political leadership in Europe itself. Finally, many critics of American defense policy, among them many Europeans, do not accept the McNamara thesis that increased military options *complement* the nuclear deterrent. They argue, instead, that flexible response *undermines* the deterrent by making the least drastic choice the most likely option in the event of Soviet aggression. According to this view, the American approach reduces Soviet fear of nuclear punishment and provides it with much greater latitude to threaten and blackmail the Western powers.

Local Warfare

America's willingness and capacity to fight in limited and local engagements, especially in the remote gray areas of the world—the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—has remained an unresolved problem since 1945. Until the outbreak of war in Korea, the United States had not even developed a limited war doctrine. The armed services prepared for a future general war, each service having a somewhat parochial orientation, and projecting, in some cases, World War II experience into World War III planning.

The limited conflict in Korea was approached by the U.S. as something of an exception or as a Soviet diversionary tactic. At any rate, the Korean War brought about substantial feeling in the United States, shared by the highest authorities, to avoid "future Koreas." But the experience with a limited engagement did encourage consideration of limited war requirements. As a result, the United States government sought throughout the 1950's to improve the defensive capabilities of local forces through alliance and military aid. At the same time, the capacity to introduce American armed forces to help beleaguered allies under attack was increased marginally. Emphasis remained on strategic retaliatory power, but greater attention was paid to the requirement for American military intervention in less drastic contingencies and for more limited purposes.

By the time President Kennedy assumed office, the necessity for the United States to improve its capacity to engage in limited conflicts had gained considerable publicity. Especially since the summer of 1958, when the United States had sent military forces into Lebanon

at the request of the Lebanese government and in response to a violent coup in neighboring Iraq, increasing doubts had been expressed about America's capacity to dispatch her forces promptly and effectively to crisis points on the periphery of Eurasia. The Lebanese experience of 1958 had revealed serious inadequacies arising from low force levels, aging ships, inadequate and scarce conventional weapons, and insufficient air transport and tactical air support. In spite of the fact that the Lebanon landings were undertaken under relatively ideal conditions—at the invitation of the local government, on a sea-coast country accessible to U.S. naval power, without hostile action against the American forces, and with an airport immediately available—the operation did not go smoothly. The Marines sent ashore had inadequate air protection (had they been opposed); additional Army support units did not arrive for several days; Army units had to be taken off the line in Germany to participate in the Lebanon operation; supporting armor did not arrive for several weeks after the landings began; air transport facilities were strained by the competing demands of the alerted Strategic Air Command, the tactical air forces, and Army units awaiting transportation. In short, in spite of the operation's relatively small scale and the almost complete absence of hostilities in the area, the Lebanon landings severely strained American military resources and limited war capabilities.[46]

The Kennedy Administration made immediate adjustments or "fixes" in limited war forces as it had in the strategic weapons systems. The President's first defense budget message stressed the requirement for enhanced mobility and an increased capacity to fight against subversion and guerrilla warfare. He called for marginal increases in conventional weaponry, air and sea-lift, tactical aircraft, helicopters, and "special forces" (counter-insurgency) personnel.[47]

In the first year of the new Administration, limited war capabilities were rapidly improved. Secretary of Defense McNamara pointed out that Army combat divisions had been increased from 11 to 16 with the strategic reserve in the United States increased from 5 to 10 divisions; anti-guerrilla forces were increased by 150 percent, amphibious forces by one third, and long-range airlift significantly

[46] See Peter Braestrup, "Limited War and the Lessons of Lebanon," *The Reporter*, April 30, 1959, pp. 25 ff.; *Aviation Week*, March 9, 1959, p. 77; Thomas R. Phillips, "Did Lebanon Prove U.S. Strategy Poor?" *Army, Navy, Air Force Register*, August 9, 1958, p. 3.

[47] President John F. Kennedy, "Recommendations Relating to Our Defense Budget," March 28, 1961, U.S. Congress, House, Doc. No. 123, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 8–10.

augmented.[48] Although this was in part an adjustment to the emergencies of 1961, by 1964 it was clear that the trend of change had produced a new look in conventional capabilities. The Army combat strength stood at 16 active divisions, each reorganized under the new "ROAD" (Re-Organized Army Division) concept that was designed to enhance "nonnuclear firepower and tactical mobility and . . . their organizational flexibility." Special forces personnel strength had been quadrupled, tactical support weapons and other equipment had been improved further, tactical air power had been increased from 21 to 24 wings and further increase to 26 wings was planned, airlift capabilities had been dramatically improved, and the Navy aircraft carrier role had been shifted from a strategic retaliatory mission to a limited warfare mission.[49]

Secretary McNamara called these forces General Purpose Forces. Their mission was to complement the nuclear deterrent by increasing the military options available to the United States in the event of conflict. They fit quite neatly into the overall conception of "flexible response." The military requirements of the General Purpose Forces were calculated in terms of the need to supplement and support the "free world" defenses. McNamara reasoned that helping the allies improve their self-defense capabilities was preferable to adding to the strength of the General Purpose Forces of the United States. "While we must always be prepared to meet our military obligations to our allies," he said, "it is in the interest of the entire free world for nations threatened by Communist attack or subversion to defend themselves insofar as possible without direct intervention by U.S. military forces."[50] But he also argued that the number of combat forces available was less significant than the capacity to react quickly in limited war situations. With this in mind, the United States made four significant adjustments to improve its reaction time:

(1) The deployment, in advance of aggression, of suitable U.S. forces to potential trouble areas;
(2) Measures to maintain the readiness of the forces held in strategic reserve in the United States for quick deployment overseas;
(3) Adequate airlift and sea-lift to move additional forces to the place of need; and
(4) The pre-positioning of equipment and supplies in potential trouble areas overseas.

[48] See Kaufmann, p. 70.
[49] Hearings, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965*, Part 4, pp. 198–224.
[50] Ibid., p. 197.

In short, Secretary McNamara argued that "our ability to move forces promptly and support them in combat is the limiting factor and not the number of divisions available."[51]

Here, then, was the basic design for American limited war strategy in the 1960's: the existence of multiple military options that complemented the general war deterrent was also to make possible engagement in small-scale conflicts without dependence on nuclear retaliation at the initial stages. It was a design that was tested under the most difficult and trying circumstances conceivable—a guerrilla war in Vietnam.

Vietnam: A Test of Will, Strategy, and Capability

The 1954 Geneva agreements divided Indochina into the three "associated states": Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel, the North under the control of the Communist Vietminh forces that had defeated the French, and the South under an anti-Communist regime. The Vietminh forces gave up considerable territory under the truce agreement, but it was generally expected that the Communists under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh would take over the entire country peacefully through elections that were to be held in 1956.

After the armistice, thousands of Vietminh troops went North to help consolidate the new Communist regime while others remained in the South biding their time in expectation of an eventual take-over of the South as well. Like most other observers, the Communists expected South Vietnam to disintegrate. But when they found to their dismay that Diem was accomplishing the impossible, that South Vietnam might indeed survive as a separate entity, the Communist leadership in Hanoi ". . . instigated a small-scale program of insurrectionary subversion in South Viet Nam in order to give the inevitable course of history a helping hand."[52] The United States declared that North Vietnam had violated the Geneva agreements and, in response to South Vietnamese requests, moved to provide military advice and assistance to defeat the "indirect aggression."

Since then, the pace of involvement has steadily increased on both sides. The remnants of the old Vietminh forces became the core of the new guerrilla war forces. They were aided by infiltrators and

[51] Ibid., p. 198.

[52] George A. Carver, Jr., "The Real Revolution in South Viet Nam," *Foreign Affairs*, XLXXX (April, 1965), p. 406.

equipment from the North. "From 1959 to 1960," according to a State Department White Paper, "when Hanoi was establishing its infiltration pipeline, at least 1,800 men and possibly 2,700 more, moved into South Viet-Nam from the North. The flow increased to a minimum of 3,700 in 1961 and at least 5,400 in 1962. There was a modest increase in 1963 to 4,200 confirmed infiltrators. . . . For 1964 the evidence . . . shows that a minimum of 4,400 infiltrators entered the South, and it is estimated more than 3,000 others were sent in.[53] Later figures from the Defense Department allege that the total number of infiltrators into South Vietnam is 39,000, of which as many as 10,000 came in since April 1964.[54] These figures are in dispute, of course, but whatever the aid from the North, the United States insists it is crucial to the war in the South.

While the insurrectionists were engaging in a destructively successful campaign of terrorism that led to a full-scale civil war presumably supported and directed by the regime in Hanoi, the volatile and divisive politics of Saigon exploded in reaction to the increasingly oppressive methods employed by Diem to retain personal power and political authority in the face of the war in the countryside and the alienation of most other political and religious factions. Diem's unpopularity can only partly account for his fall from power and assassination in 1963. South Vietnam had been in a continuing state of ferment and many factions and personal rivalries maneuvered for power. The coup in 1963 was followed by other coups and political upheavals. With Diem gone the only remaining source of stability appeared to be the continued presence of American aid and military power.

The conflict in Vietnam had reached new intensity at approximately the same time as Kennedy took office in the United States. The American government responded by increasing its supply of military aid and "advisers." The latter constituted only a few hundred in the beginning. In 1961, a major buildup was begun in an effort to turn the tide. By 1965, more than 170,000 American servicemen and large quantities of modern military equipment were committed to the defense of the Saigon regime. Moreover, the campaign took a more ominous turn. Prior to 1964, American military personnel had

[53] U.S. Department of State, "Aggression From the North: The Record of North Viet-Nam's Campaign to Conquer South Viet-Nam," Department of State Publication 7839, February 1965, p. 3.

[54] Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, news conference, April 26, 1965, as reported in the *New York Times*, April 27, 1965, p. 12.

been, at least technically, noncombatant "advisers" in the fighting. They were there to help train South Vietnamese and to advise on battlefield tactics to be employed against the insurgents. But in August 1964, North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked American destroyers in the Bay of Tonkin off the coast of Vietnam. In response President Johnson ordered a retaliatory bombing raid against North Vietnamese port facilities. This was the first step in America's more direct involvement in the conflict, and the initial American attack against the alleged *source* of the aggression in Vietnam. In February 1965, the insurgents stepped up their attacks against American personnel, attacking an air base and a military barracks, destroying planes, and killing a number of American servicemen. A decisive change in American response followed. The United States ordered air attacks on North Vietnamese military targets and routes of supply to the South, both in North Vietnam and in Laos. The war was escalated by American decision. That decision meant carrying the war directly to North Vietnam by means of repeated air attacks. President Johnson explained his decision to expand the war in the following terms:

> We do this in order to slow down aggression.
>
> We do this to increase the confidence of the brave people of South Vietnam. . . .
>
> And we do this to convince the leaders of North Vietnam, and all who seek to share their conquest, of a very simple fact:
>
> We will not be defeated.
>
> We will not grow tired.
>
> We will not withdraw. . . .

He went on to explain that the United States sought only a free and independent South Vietnam, free from external interference, and that to this end the American government was ready for "unconditional discussions," and ready, also, to offer a carrot instead of a stick: a billion dollar investment in aid to Southeast Asia (including North Vietnam) as an alternative to a continuation of the war.[55]

At this writing it is impossible to determine what the outcome will be. It is clear that although President Johnson had stated repeatedly that "we seek no wider war," he ordered the war widened. The raids on North Vietnam were no longer retaliations for specific acts by the Communist forces, but, rather, calculated and carefully controlled actions related to the overall war effort. They were quite in line with

[55] President Lyndon B. Johnson, address at Johns Hopkins University, April 7, 1965.

the McNamara strategy of controlled response. These actions were presumably designed to reduce the supply of arms and men being sent to the South, to heighten the costs and risks of the North Vietnamese regime as indirect sponsor of the war, and to gain a more forceful position for the United States and Saigon in case negotiations for an armistice or another form of settlement ever took place.

Aside from the specifics of the Vietnam conflict and the political, legal, and moral dilemmas it presents for the United States, the war in Vietnam constitutes a very real challenge to the military rationales of the McNamara strategy of flexible response with multiple options. From the time of its decision to support the Diem regime in 1954, the United States government has maintained that the preservation of South Vietnam's independence is in the interests of the United States and the "free world." This definition of interest and the possibility of its defense have been debatable from the beginning. This issue, however, cannot be adequately explored here. The point is that a commitment was made. It has been reinforced through subsequent restatements and a deepening American involvement. The McNamara approach has been applied, and the calculated heightening of the war risks appears to be in accord with the controlled escalatory measures that the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations' military policies were supposed to make available for the purpose of countering low-level and indirect aggressions. Indeed, the Secretary of Defense has become so identified with the American military responses in Vietnam that it has been called by his critics "McNamara's War."

Secretary McNamara has defined the official American position with regard to the basic issues and requirements more clearly, perhaps, than any other spokesman: ". . . The survival of an independent government in South Vietnam," he stated in 1964,

> is so important to the security of all Southeast Asia and to the free world that I can conceive of no alternative other than to take all necessary measures within our capability to prevent a Communist victory. We must prove that Communist aggression cannot succeed through subversion, but will fail as surely as it has failed in direct confrontation."[56]

In terms of the issues at stake, then, McNamara believes that two are central: (1) the security of the region depends on the preservation of an independent South Vietnam; and (2) indirect aggression by guerrilla warfare techniques must be defeated in South Vietnam or that model of aggression is likely to be repeated. On both counts,

[56] Hearings, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965*, Part 4, p. 12.

therefore, the stakes were interpreted as being much higher and more directly related to the security of the non-Communist world than the particular piece of real estate on which the conflict was taking place.

In order to understand the American position, therefore, one must perceive the basic strategic design that had developed to deal with such contingencies. To repeat briefly, that design involved the following key points: (1) economic and military aid to strengthen the will and capacity of nations to resist attack or subversion; (2) deployment of forces and equipment to potential trouble areas in advance of aggression; and (3) the capacity to bring further forces to bear swiftly.[57] This posture assumes that the capacity to deal with the most dangerous circumstances, such as large-scale nuclear war, is not accompanied by the capacity to counter effectively conflicts of a lesser scale. The idea is "to keep open as many useful options as possible"[58] in order to improve America's capacity to deter aggression by having the evident capacity to defeat it, and to respond to attacks that occur in a flexible, controlled, and limited manner.

Because the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations inherited the Vietnam problem, McNamara had no chance to employ the deterrent aspect of deploying combat forces *in advance* to the potential trouble area. Nevertheless, the war in Vietnam constitutes a test of the McNamara strategy in two respects. On the one hand, the United States is attempting to develop an effective means with which to defeat a Communist-sponsored insurgency movement. On the other hand, the U.S. is hoping that by defeating the insurrection in Vietnam, it will *deter* similar future inclinations. In short, McNamara conceives of the struggle in Vietnam as "a decisive test," one that involves the credibility and viability of the American effort to contain Communist expansion, and a test of the Communist insurrectionist technique itself. Thus, Secretary McNamara testified in February, 1965:

> . . . South Vietnam is the keystone. Here, the North Vietnamese and Chinese Communists are putting into practice their theory that any non-Communist government of an emerging nation can be overthrown by externally supported, covert, armed aggression, even when that government is backed by U.S. economic and military assistance. . . .
>
> Thus, the stakes in South Vietnam are far greater than the loss of one small country to Communism. It would be a serious setback to the cause of freedom throughout the world and would greatly complicate the task of preventing the spread of Communism.[59]

[57] Ibid., pp. 197–98.
[58] Ibid., p. 190.
[59] The *New York Times*, February 19, 1965, p. 10.

Here, then, the United States is putting into practice its theory that Communist-sponsored, covert, armed aggression can be defeated by providing economic aid and military assistance to the beleaguered government and applying a slowly rising set of forceful measures against the insurgents *and their sources of support.* The outcome is uncertain. It is, however, quite likely that this strategy will be tested again in the near future. One thing *is* clear at this point. The United States is having great difficulty in accomplishing its purpose of defeating indirect aggression. It is, therefore, unlikely that the pattern of Communist-sponsored insurgency will be deterred except, perhaps, in the unlikely event that the war in Vietnam is dramatically and successfully concluded in America's favor.

CHAPTER 7

Strategies and Forces in Perspective

Deterring War

In the nuclear age the avoidance of war has become an increasingly vital national objective because the consequences of war have become potentially catastrophic. Deterrence involves the avoidance of conflict by threatening punitive military action to make a clash of arms less tempting than any other alternative open to an adversary.[1] As such, it is an exceptionally attractive strategy for the United States. But an irony exists in the fact that the premise of war avoidance through deterrence requires a commitment to go to war if deterrence fails. Deterrence operates through the "skillful *nonuse* of military forces"[2] by manipulating military threats in a way that makes resorting to armed force too costly in comparison to the values the aggressor seeks to gain. But resorting to force should also be less costly to the United States than the loss of the values it seeks to protect—otherwise, it would be irrational to carry out the deterrent threat.

There is, of course, nothing really new in the fundamentals of deterrence. Traditional diplomacy often sought to achieve national goals by the same general deterrence logic that is employed today. However, the potential horrors of atomic and thermonuclear wars have made the *reliability* of contemporary deterrent strategies indispensable to national survival. A failure in deterrence could lead to a swift and thorough war of annihilation, although lesser consequences are much more likely (as the experience of the past two decades has shown). Clearly the nightmare of nuclear holocaust haunts us, imposing caution and restraint upon the diplomacy of the great powers. This phenomenon is a salient feature of the international politics of our time. Wars still occur. But it is not accidental that in recent years the identity of the participants in armed conflict has become more ambiguous, and that wars have become more limited in scope, wea-

[1] Some define the concept more broadly to include all efforts to prevent courses of action that are inimical to a nation's interests, but this confuses deterrence with traditional diplomacy. Deterrence is enforced by at least the implicit threat to *fight* to defend one's interests.

[2] Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 9.

pons, and tactics. Even wars between small nations are sometimes inhibited by the threat of intervention by major powers.[3] In short, the danger of "explosion" or "expansion"[4] of local conflicts seems to have a decided influence on the behavior of nuclear and non-nuclear powers alike.

Deterrence in Operation

How "skillful" has the United States been in its "nonuse of military forces" for purposes of deterrence? One of the difficulties that stands in the way of a realistic assessment of the effects of American deterrent policies is that we obviously have no reliable indicators to tell us if a deterrent relationship exists and is working. Can we really determine what actions the Soviet Union has *not* taken because of the American nuclear threat? With respect to Western Europe, for example, we can never know except in the *absence* of NATO deterrence policies whether the Soviet Union has any intention of conquering Europe by force of arms. Deterrence may appear to be successful because a nation avoids the courses of action to which the deterrent is addressed, but the adversary may be behaving as it is for reasons quite apart from the deterrent threat. One suspects that in a great many cases deterrence policies can only partly account for the behavior of the apparently deterred party. Thus, the success of deterrence is almost impossible to ascertain except in cases of stark confrontation, the most dramatic case in point being the Cuban crisis of 1962. In that incident Soviet policy was drastically and obviously altered as a result of an American military threat. But the effect of deterrent threats is usually not that clear.

On the other hand, the *failure* of deterrence may be much more evident. When a nation ignores a pointed warning and proceeds in its intended course of action, then clearly the application of the threat has not had its desired effect. What happens thereafter, of course, depends on the will and capacity of the deterring nation. In the case of Dienbienphu, the United States ambiguously backed away from its threat to intervene and to punish. But in subsequent events in Vietnam the United States ultimately became willing to impose punishments on the alleged source of aggression, North Vietnam,

[3] In some cases, however, the threat of intervention precipitates a counter-intervention threat. Under such conditions small powers may take advantage of a deterrent stand-off or stalemate, giving them unusual freedom of action.

[4] Halperin, p. 3.

while attempting to deter Chinese intervention by threatening retaliation against that nation as well.

The American strategy of deterrence has ambiguous consequences because the behavior of other states is only partly influenced by our policies. Each state must react according to its own internal political dynamics, its perception of the meaning and intent of the policies of other states, and a host of other factors that impinge upon the political process of a particular country. Only under very unusual circumstances could the American deterrent become the single determinant of another nation's behavior.

Deterrence, nevertheless, remains a central aspect of American strategy. The shift in strategic emphasis from the 1950's to the 1960's indicates a new realism about deterrence. Whereas the American government once counted heavily on deterrence working, the McNamara reformulation of deterrence is based explicitly on the expectation that deterrence may fail. As a consequence, military forces have been geared to this possibility, especially with respect to low-level conflict where deterrence has never been reliable. Thus there is a new emphasis on limited war capabilities and the capacity and special techniques for deploying forces abroad quickly. Moreover, by emphasizing "controlled" responses, current policies reduce the hair-trigger characteristics of America's defense posture. This new approach is more reasonably related to the political and military challenges the United States is likely to face, and it minimizes the chances of a central exchange of nuclear weapons by accident or miscalculation.

The commitment of American strategic forces to a deterrent role based on controlled second-strike capabilities, complemented by combat forces deployed in Europe and Asia, undoubtedly imposes a deterrent on unrestrained action by the Soviet Union and Communist China. The shift in emphasis in Communist strategy from the overt challenge to the ambiguous probe, now highlighted by support of "Wars of National Liberation," is hardly fortuitous. This constitutes a new challenge to American strategy; but it also implies that on the whole America's overall deterrent has been successful. It also suggests, however, that deterrence is most applicable to major military confrontations. Minor incursions, of which guerrilla warfare is now the prime example, are unlikely to be deterred by military counterthreats unless these threats credibly imply unacceptable escalation of the conflict.

The emphasis in recent years on limited war forces and counterinsurgency techniques by the United States indicates that American

strategy has shifted to take the limits of deterrence into account. This is a period of testing, however, and it is not yet clear that the United States has come forth with effective measures for counteracting guerrilla warfare. The current Administration has stated quite bluntly that insurgency in Vietnam must be defeated or the United States will be confronted with similar conflicts elsewhere. Whereas this argument is plausible in areas adjoining Vietnam, it is difficult to assess the influence of the outcome of the Vietnam war on revolutionary forces in other regions of the world. Victory by the Viet Cong may encourage these forces, but defeat may not deter them. A more reasonable view is that American success in Vietnam may discourage China and the Soviet Union from further adventures of this kind. But rebellions, whether they are abetted and aided by the Communists, are likely to continue to plague weak, unpopular regimes.

The Quest for Stability

Viewing American strategy during the past twenty years, it is evident that the American approach to world politics has become significantly more sophisticated, but that the problems encountered have also become increasingly complex. In terms of the distribution of power, bipolarity has given way to multipolarity. The emergence of new power centers has multiplied the security problems of the United States. The military and political challenge of the Communist bloc under the commanding banner of the Soviet Union, however ominous, was easier to respond to through an association of Western states largely dependent on the United States, than is the new, diverse, and discordant political universe in which we now find ourselves. Old nations are turning back to their own resources, and new nations are striving to exercise new-found power. And although the United States seeks to promote an international system in which diversities can flourish, the American government has by and large concluded that new political arrangements must develop within an essentially peaceful framework. It sees in the so-called "Wars of National Liberation" a new means by which the major Communist powers can extend their influence and control at the expense of the freedom and order that the United States views as basic requisites of American security and international peace.

The United States hoped, in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, that the two nuclear giants could reach a *détente*. The American government had, after all, clearly abandoned any

thought of "rolling back" Communism in Europe and Asia. The Russians had discovered that military gambles of the Cuban variety risked nuclear war and the destruction of all that they had built. Although there is some evidence that both sides sought a relaxation of the Cold War, and that the nuclear test ban agreement, following in the wake of the Cuban crisis, was a step in that direction, both have since discovered that they are not adequately in control of events. The Vietnam war, in particular, appears to be the type of escalatory crisis that each seeks to avoid. But neither side is able to exercise sufficient influence on the forces that are promoting that conflict.

Thus, the United States has found that the building of stable relationships with the Soviet Union is not enough to guarantee peace and security. Mutually deterred from high-risk diplomacy, the two superpowers are nevertheless insufficiently dominant to impose similar restraints on the lesser powers. The United States still seeks to promote international stability and, in military terms, hopes to deter and contain the uses of violence by other nations. The Russians seem to be on the brink of choice between continued opposition to the "adventurism" of Chinese diplomacy and an exploitation of the instabilities of the underdeveloped areas in order to preempt Chinese leadership in the new revolutionary thrust. If the Soviet Union decides upon the latter course, it will inevitably clash with American power, because U.S. policies are based on the assumption that continued instability and disorder threaten world peace—and, hence, her own security.

Policies in Perspective

Two profound changes mark America's postwar diplomacy: the United States found it necessary to maintain a large military establishment in time of peace; and the United States became deeply entangled in political affairs abroad in total abandonment of its isolationist policies. The Soviet Union ineptly provided the stimulant for these developments by its belligerence and intransigence after World War II. Thus, it was largely a reaction to Soviet policies that caused the United States to develop a strategy that fully employed military power as a basic instrument of foreign policy.

America has never fully adjusted itself, however, to her new approach to international politics. One finds the United States often inclined in two directions at once: we wish to impose our power and

will on the international system, or certain members of it, in order to "solve" problems once and for all; at the same time, we are inclined to withdraw altogether in the belief that events are either beyond our control or that involvement is not in our interest. Both are expressions of political frustration. Whereas the United States has usually avoided these extremes, the tendencies nevertheless persist, especially in the search for permanent, total, and inexpensive solutions. Peace enforced by the simple expedient of a threat to use our atomic monopoly against any aggressor was America's initial postwar "solution" to international conflict. The inflexibility and incredibility of this policy led to pragmatic adjustments in military policy in response to specific events. Yet the simple quest for a grand solution remains an important aspect of the American approach to foreign policy.

This quest at least partly explains the exceptional and persistent reliance on nuclear weapons as a deterrent to aggression. Although our nuclear policy has not always been appropriate, American policy makers have often been reluctant to admit it. Other approaches have always been more complicated and less dramatic. However, the development of American strategy over the past two decades reveals that the salient elements of an effective and noncatastrophic deterrent formula have become more prominent, and cruder and largely less credible features have receded into the background. After the loss of the atomic monopoly, and during the deterioration of American superiority in strategic strike capabilities, the United States began to move away from the doomsday aspects of nuclear deterrence in search of more moderate and reasonable approaches. Although the United States still relies on massive nuclear retaliation in certain grave contingencies, she has substantially adjusted her panoply of threats and manipulation of military power to more measured and restrained objectives.

The Objectives of American Power

What does America seek in world politics? The United States has been rather uncertain about her global objectives, and this lack of explicitness has undermined the coherency of her policies. The truth is that America does not know what to do with her power. America's basic foreign policy goal is defined in terms of security, but those conditions that enhance security are only dimly perceived. American policy makers have tended to define security in terms of geography,

politics, and ideology. Their expressions of security are essentially negative: to keep strategic regions of the world from political control and/or military domination by hostile powers. Both "containment" and "deterrence" describe basically negative policy formulations. They call for blocking and forestalling actions to prevent the Soviet Union and Communist China from gaining any additional territorial control and political alignment. These are the roles to which American military power has largely been committed.

Positive goals of American policy are more difficult to express, and defy precise definition. Almost instinctively the United States has sought to promote stabilizing relationships in international politics. Strategic nuclear deterrence has been one method for enforcing stability; another is military alliance. Military and economic aid have also been used for this purpose. But stability is an elusive object. And although the United States perceives that international stability will minimize threats to her security, other powers do not. Whereas the United States promotes orderly growth and change, others tend to exploit disorder. Again, military power becomes an important arbiter.

Beyond security and stability, the United States has a basic ideological motive. American policy makers have defined American objectives not only in terms of opposition to the domination of Europe and Asia by hostile powers—which could conceivably result in military and political combinations that could overpower the United States—but also in terms of the growth of totalitarian systems. It is argued that our way of life cannot flourish in political isolation, that the United States needs an international environment in which nations can freely establish their political institutions. The United States believes that if that choice is truly free, others will also choose the democratic route. The United States, for reasons of ideological conviction as well as self-interest, has taken upon itself the responsibility to see that other nations may also have the opportunity to choose freely.

But the quests for security, stability, and democracy are not necessarily compatible goals. Authoritarian regimes are increasingly subject to disorders and revolution. Revolutionary forces create a dilemma for America: the United States often faces a choice between supporting authoritarian regimes, because of her opposition to destabilizing politics and to Communism, and supporting the aspirations of indigenous populations to establish more liberal forms of government. Because the Communists may attempt to turn revolutions to

their own purposes, the United States has become increasingly inclined to adopt an interventionist role in order to prevent Communist take-overs. There is no simple solution to this dilemma. American responses thus far have compromised her own ideological commitment: the United States appears to be supporting reactionary regimes rather than democratic forces. Yet the fear that Communists may come to power in the midst of revolutionary disorders is realistic. Given the trends of political conflict in recent years, this dilemma represents a grave challenge to American foreign policy. Vietnam again emerges as the great test. There the problem is clearly drawn in military and political terms. American military power may or may not be adaptable to the challenges of guerrilla warfare. But the promotion of democracy requires much more than the defeat of local rebellions however they may be fomented.

Military Adaptations

In terms of strategies and military instruments how responsive has America been to the political challenges of the past twenty years? The record is a mixed one. One outstanding feature of recent years has been the increasingly self-conscious effort to establish a rational pattern of national policy. In the early postwar years, this effort was characterized by gropings to find both the handles and appropriate instruments for an effective foreign policy. The Eisenhower years were marked by a highly stylized effort to force policies into "acceptable" categories (in terms of domestic needs). In the current period, which so clearly bears the imprint of Robert S. McNamara, policies and programs have been systematically rationalized. Until recently military doctrines, organization, and weaponry of the armed services were left mainly to the internal vagaries of interservice politics and the self-determination of the military profession, to be checked only (but severely) by strict budget limitations. Today, military forces and doctrines are more fully integrated into the national strategies of the government. The various elements of the armed forces are more clearly related functionally to the overall missions of defense and deterrence. Weapons systems are rationalized in terms of their contribution to overriding policy objectives. And foreign and military policies are more consciously determined by the dimensions of military power that stand behind them.

Whereas weapons and forces have not always been suited to the circumstances confronting the United States, more often the irrele-

vance of policies rather than military instruments has been basic to the problem. Military instruments are adaptable. It is true that the armed services tend to "rationalize" their capabilities in terms of current doctrines while clinging to favorite weapons and even outmoded concepts. Moreover, every Administration has an interest in retaining key weapons systems rather than creating new ones because of the enormous costs incurred by defense programs. Yet the fundamental question is almost always in terms of *how* the military instruments available are to be employed. Should American forces be deployed abroad, and if so, where? Should the defenses of the West be inescapably tied to nuclear weapons or should dual capabilities be promoted? Should strategic targeting be based on a counterforce or a counter-city formula? Adjustments in weapons and forces to conform to policies have not been difficult. Indeed, the armed forces have been quick to develop appropriate military instruments when the need has been clearly indicated.

The adaptability of military instruments to policy needs rests ultimately on the skill with which the policies themselves are formulated and articulated. A constant interaction between those who understand the limits of military power and those who are most sensitive to the requirements of American foreign policy is necessary. No single individual—not a Dulles on the one side, or a McNamara on the other—can fully appreciate by himself the complexities of national security affairs broadly defined.

The United States has shown in the development of its national strategies over the past two decades that its institutions and policies are adaptable to political and technological change. The coordination of its military and foreign policies has been developed both institutionally, especially in the National Security Council, and politically through more sophisticated processes of crisis management by the political leadership. The American military posture has been greatly modified over the years to conform to political challenges abroad. But these are long-term adaptations. There is some evidence of inflexibility in the short run. There appears to be a lag between the development of a problem and the responses that will resolve it. A current example is the growing crisis within the NATO alliance, a crisis that stems from the lag in readjusting the political arrangements for coordination of interallied policy that will take into account the changes in status and power of the most important members of the Alliance (Great Britain, France, and Germany), and the change in the defense problems in the NATO area that arise from alterations

in the military equation, changes in military technology, and a fundamental reorientation of Communist policies and methods.

Thus far the United States has stood for the status quo in the NATO alliance. In terms of the strategic argument, the United States has logic and power on its side. But the European members have reemerged as powers in their own right, and they will be increasingly inclined to exercise their independence. The United States could take the lead in the reformulation of the NATO alliance, but thus far it seems willing to wait and leave the initiative to France and others.

In short, the adaptability of the military instruments of American power is hardly ever the real issue. It is the adaptability of American foreign policy that is most often at stake. In this respect the American approach is, on occasion, ponderously slow.

The Future As Challenge

No amount of internal consistency and logic, of course, will guarantee wise and successful foreign and military policies. Military forces are only *instruments* of policy. They limit to some extent the range of policy alternatives. Thus they must be carefully adapted to policy needs. But how is military power to be used? American military power has been for the most part successfully employed to check the military expansion of Communist power. It has deterred the major Communist governments from rash and violent action. It has checked power with power. But American military might is limited in its effect. A modicum of order, stability, and security is within our reach. But the ability to deny our adversaries military successes is not the end. It is just the beginning.

For the United States is not challenged by hostile Communist powers alone. It is challenged by the forces of change themselves. Newly emerging nations are seeking a place for themselves in the international system. The older nations, led by the example of France, seek greater independence and new modes of power. These forces of change are likely to produce many political problems for the United States. President Johnson has stated the case forthrightly:

> This will be a disorderly planet for a long time. In Asia, as elsewhere, the forces of the modern world are shaking old ways and uprooting ancient civilizations. There will be turbulence and struggle and even violence. Great social change, as we see in our own country, does not always come without conflict.
>
> We must expect that nations will on occasion be in dispute with us.

It may be because we are rich, or powerful, or because we have made mistakes, or because they honestly fear our intentions. However, no nation need ever fear that we desire their land, or to impose our will, or to dictate their institutions.

But we will always oppose the effort of one nation to conquer another nation.

We will do this because our own security is at stake.

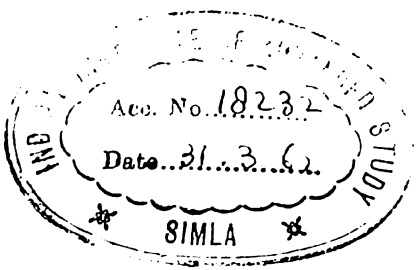
But there is more to it than that. For our generation has a dream. It is a very old dream. But we have the power and now we have the opportunity to make it come true.

For centuries, nations have struggled among each other. But we dream of a world where disputes are settled by law and reason. And we will try to make it so. . . .[5]

It is more likely that the United States will be faced with dispute and conflict than with the triumph of law and reason. American strategy will require the continued employment of flexible military instruments for the protection of American security and the deterrence of large-scale violence. But, as in the past, the United States must look beyond security to the construction of a better world, because mankind aspires to improvements in material wealth, physical well-being, and political power. The route that these nations take will depend in part upon the United States. For if the social revolutions in the underdeveloped areas are to move in the direction of democratic government, these revolutions must have Western support. American military power is being reoriented to help provide small nations with the security they need to develop without external coercion and uninvited interference. The West has vigorous competitors in the ideologies and tactics of the Soviet Union and Communist China. The American response must not be restricted simply to maintaining a military balance that will check Communist expansion; it must also be directed to the promotion of an international political environment in which democratic societies can prosper. Such an environment will require a continual effort to persuade China and the Soviet Union that their aspirations cannot be achieved by violent means; it will require a diplomacy aimed at encouraging the emerging nations to build open societies and to avoid the racial and political hostilities that nationalism and Communism stimulate. It will also require the imaginative leadership of the United States to build better links between the nations of the West in the direction of a progressive political and economic community in which other nations will wish to

[5] President Lyndon B. Johnson, address at The Johns Hopkins University, April 7, 1965.

participate. These tasks cannot be accomplished without military power, nor can armed strength alone produce the world we seek. They can be accomplished only if the United States pursues with new vigor and imagination a truly internationalist role in which this country's leaders act not only in the knowledge that we now live in such close political proximity to the other nations of the world that we have a vital stake in the course of international events but also with the conviction that the United States can and will contribute to the growth of international community, freedom, and order.



GOVERNMENT IN THE MODERN WORLD

GENERAL EDITORS

Paul Y. Hammond — Nelson W. Polsby

This series seeks to put basic tools for understanding politics in the hands of the student. By presenting a variety of approaches to the study of political institutions, ideas, and behavior, it hopes to enlarge his awareness of our common problems, increase his ability to define and analyze them, and, perhaps, to enhance his capacity to meet and master them.

AMERICAN STRATEGY IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

By David W. Tarr
University of Wisconsin

Presenting a survey of American foreign policy since World War II, this book illuminates the relationship between military power and foreign policy, between domestic political considerations and the demands of international politics. It thereby places military policy in its proper context — an integral part of foreign policy. While explaining the forces that have shaped American strategy for the past two decades, the author discusses how the United States has faced major cr... of Nationalist China, the proliferatio... the Korean War, the Berlin Blocka... and Vietnam.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, 60 Fifth Avenue, New York 10011