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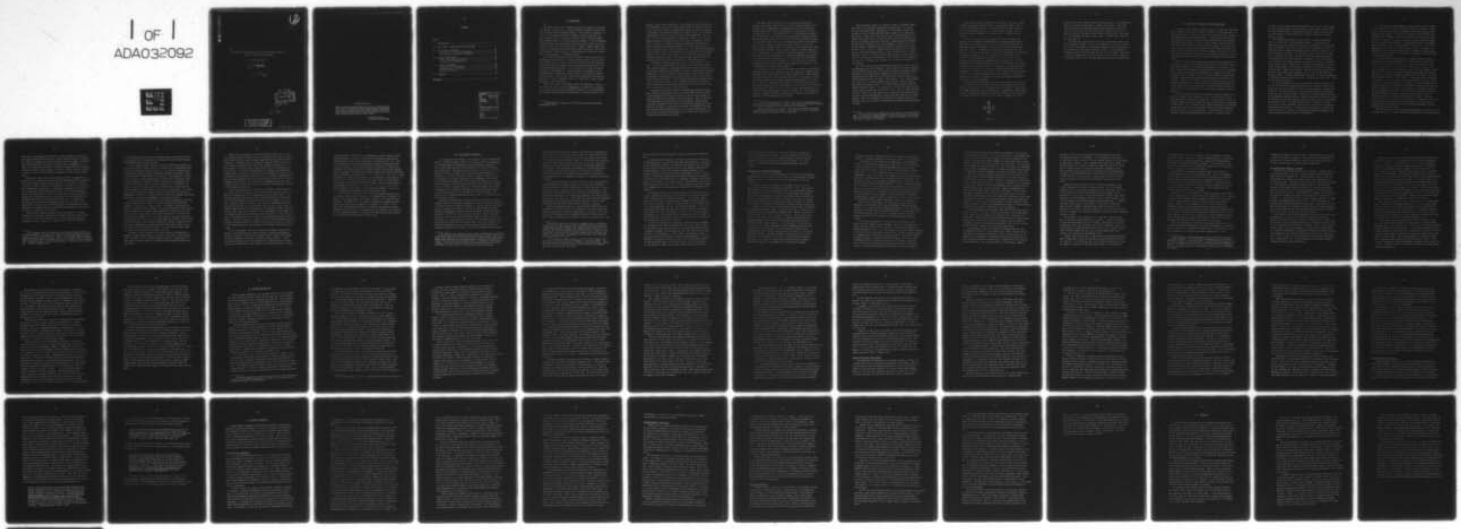

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(6) INFORMATION AND PERCEPTION IN LIMITED STRATEGIC CONFLICT: SOME U.S. AND SOVIET DIFFERENCES

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I. INTRODUCTION

The major focus of U.S. strategic planning has long been on general nuclear war, conceived of as a rapid and massive exchange of most of the U.S. and Soviet Union strategic arsenals. Lesser forms of strategic conflict have received attention from academic strategic theorists, but until recently were not considered seriously in U.S. defense planning. With President Nixon's oft quoted question of whether or not the President should have more than one option to deal with nuclear attack on the U.S. in 1970, however, the focus slowly began to change. (Nixon, 1970) More recently, with ex-Defense Secretary Schlesinger's interest in the subject as an impetus,* issues related to limited strategic conflict have come to figure increasingly in U.S. defense planning.

This paper will address some broad questions concerning the role of information and perception in limited strategic conflict, and the differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union relative to those questions. A broad perspective is adopted, in part because the subject itself is so ill-defined and squishy that it is not obvious how it could be sharply narrowed in a meaningful way. Narrow, technical comparisons of, say, reconnaissance or command and control systems, can be made, but without a broader context, the question of what such comparisons really mean remains open. Limited strategic conflict is, after all, an event outside the range of prior experience.

Much of the activity now ongoing within the Department of Defense is concerned with limited strategic operations or limited nuclear options, i.e., with military operations involving limited uses of nuclear weapons in carefully controlled and constrained ways. The focus here will be on

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*As expressed, for example, in his 1975 Defense Posture Statement (Schlesinger, 1975).

conflict, rather than on operations. That change in focus is deliberate. It is meaningful to talk in isolation--apart from the context of the particular conflict in which the strikes are carried out--about the ability of Minuteman to hit selected targets in the Soviet Union, or the relative vulnerabilities of U.S. and Soviet electric power industries. That the same is true of the information and perception, however, is not obvious. Limited strategic operations will not take place in isolation. If they occur it will be in a context of events, perceptions, and objectives which transcend the operations themselves. They will occur as part of a conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The important informational questions which arise in that connection are those related to the broader context of that conflict as a whole. To focus narrowly on the military operations alone would tend to exclude those larger questions from consideration and thus to hide the importance of that larger context.

Information in limited strategic conflict can be thought of in two ways. It can be viewed narrowly, in terms of specific pieces of data such as sensor readouts or bomb damage assessment reports, and their use in particular tasks such as flushing of aircraft or targeting of restrikes. Information can also be thought of more broadly, however, as the "stuff" which makes up the pictures of the world on which various actors in the conflict base their actions. This includes information, narrowly defined. It also includes much more, such as communications from the opponent, advice from advisors, and even the underlying world views various actors use to filter and interpret other information.

Interpreted sufficiently broadly, informational questions include those relevant factors which affect those world views, and hence affect the way different actors would perceive the conflict and interpret incoming information in the light of those perceptions. Most of the questions addressed in this paper fall in this category. These include structural differences in the national leadership mechanisms and in the selection and tenure of advisors on both sides, differences in the ways each side perceives issues relating to the strategic relationship, and the effects of societal differences--a free and open U.S. society vs. a closed and controlled Soviet society.

Some might argue that these are not appropriate questions for analysis--that analysis should be restricted to narrower questions concerning sensors, communication systems, and the like, and that these broader questions are either not meaningful or will somehow take care of themselves. Such a view exemplifies a U.S. characteristic discussed later in the paper--a predilection to see problems in tangible, preferably quantitative, terms, and to avoid or set aside less tangible issues. I do not believe that such a view is tenable with regard to as important and uncertain a subject as limited strategic conflict. By its very nature, limited strategic conflict has within it the possibility of large-scale national disaster. That possibility cannot be totally eliminated, but its likelihood can be reduced by a good understanding of the problem by the national security planners and managers responsible for shaping U.S. limited conflict capabilities. At the same time, the likelihood of a disastrous outcome may be increased if those capabilities are shaped around an image of limited conflict which ignores factors likely to play a significant role in any actual conflict.

This may be, in fact, one of the lessons to be learned from Vietnam.* Throughout the 60s, U.S. planners saw the war primarily in tangible terms--firepower ratios, body counts, sortie rates, and the like. Those perceptions led inexorably to the conclusion that the U.S. was winning, or could win with the addition of a few more resources (troops, arms, etc.) doing more of the same. That conclusion turned out to be wrong, in part for reasons which could have been more apparent at the time had our perceptions been different.† Had that been the case, we might have taken different actions to have brought about a different outcome. Or, if the extant outcome was inevitable, we might have been able to allow it to come about at less cost to the Vietnamese and to ourselves.

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*It should be recognized, of course, that the Viet Nam experience was sufficiently rich and ambiguous to allow a wide range of conflicting "lessons" to be learned, depending on the perceptions of the observer.

†"Our perceptions" here refers to the collective national perceptions on which national actions were based. There were, of course, individuals whose perceptions varied quite widely from those.

Limited strategic conflict is different things to different people. Some view it as a strategic concept whose time has come, as a way of getting increased political leverage out of the strategic forces, and perhaps as a way of counterbalancing Soviet superiority in general purpose forces. Others view it as a way around serious deficiencies in an "assured destruction only" strategic deterrent policy, and perhaps as a way out of otherwise disastrous situations. Among analysts and planners who deal with it regularly, there is a tendency to come to see it in a positive light, as something we should strive to be "good" at, in some technical sense. That is a judgment which this paper will try to avoid. Rather, the attitude adopted here will view the possibility of limited strategic conflict as a highly risky national security planning problem which is not yet very well understood. The objective of this research is to attempt to illuminate, but certainly not to resolve, some aspects of that problem.

The paper will be broad and sometimes speculative in nature, with the coverage spotty and often incomplete. Some readers may find this approach less satisfactory than, say a more sharply defined and narrower technical comparison of reconnaissance or command and control capabilities. It certainly provides fewer clear-cut "answers," and nothing in the way of direct guidance toward new systems or R&D programs. To be really meaningful, however, more narrowly defined studies must be conducted within a meaningful and coherent context.* No such context currently exists for limited strategic conflict. To create such a context full-blown and from scratch would be beyond the scope of this paper. That is rather something that will evolve over time, and with the accumulation and reconciliation of various studies and analyses of limited strategic conflict and related matters. This paper, perhaps, will contribute to that process by illuminating aspects of the role of information and providing some perspective on them.

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*This is true even for studies where that context is not fully specified, but rather left largely implicit. This works in many cases because there is an implicit context agreed to and by the community for whom the study and its results are intended.

Before going on with the substance of the paper, there are a couple of themes concerning information and its interpretation which I want to illustrate and discuss briefly. The illustrations may seem frivolous, but the themes themselves are not. They are deadly serious, and they recur repeatedly in questions of information use in limited strategic conflict.

The first is the fact that information (or even the question of whether or not something is information) has no meaning without context. Thus, when we talk about status of forces or empty-hole information as important strategic information, we necessarily do so only within some particular context. In another context the same information (or lack thereof) may look quite irrelevant. This can be illustrated by considering the middle character in Fig. 1. Read across, and the character is clearly a B. Read down and it's equally clearly a 13. It is, at the same time, both and neither, depending on how you look at it. Our lack of experience with limited strategic conflict, and the absence of a clear paradigm for it, will often leave us in a position of being unsure whether to read across or down, i.e., of how to interpret particular pieces of information. The best we can do, then, is to attempt to keep an open mind and to allow for multiple interpretations when necessary. In that way perhaps, we can reduce the chances of excluding an interpretation which later turns out to be important.

The second theme is related to the first, but concerns the fact that once a particular context or model for interpreting information has been chosen, it limits what can be learned from new information. In particular, the assumed context may give a perfectly good interpretation (within <u>that</u> context) for information which interpreted in a broader context would show the assumed context to be invalid. This complex-sounding point can be

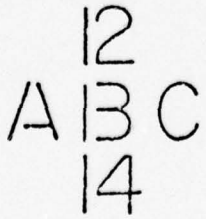

FIGURE 1

easily seen in one of Charles Schulz's Peanuts cartoons. Lucy and Charlie Brown are standing looking down at a small, black object. Lucy tells Charlie that the big, black bug doesn't move around because she's the Queen. She just sits there and lets the other bugs do all the work. Charlie tells Lucy the object is not a bug but a jelly bean. Lucy looks at it and observes, "By golly, you're right. I wonder how a jelly bean got to be Queen."

The point here, and one which will crop up from time to time in the discussion which follows, is that it is important not to get too locked in to a particular model for information interpretation, particularly in an uncertain area like limited strategic conflict. Prior assumptions and models based on them are likely to turn out to be wrong. This places a premium on adaptability, and the ability to see beyond the confines of a particular model and to throw that model away when that is appropriate.

II. WHAT KIND OF CONFLICT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT

In order to study limited strategic conflict, we need some conceptual model or image of the kind of conflict we ought to be concerned with. If the analysis is to be relevant to larger U.S. national security concerns, that image cannot be chosen arbitrarily. It must reflect the potential future threat to national security and must encompass the problems which that threat carries with it. Since a future limited conflict threat is far from clearly defined, constructing such an image is at best an exercise in considered speculation. Because of this, images of limited strategic conflict may differ considerably from analyst to analyst. This is good, since too much agreement in an area as highly uncertain as this can be potentially dangerous, as the Peanuts cartoon discussed earlier illustrates.

Images will also differ depending on the questions being addressed, since those questions will determine which aspects of the problem receive the greatest emphasis. The image considered here, in particular, will place a great deal of emphasis on uncertainty and the role of information and perception in dealing with uncertainty. No attempt will be made to structure limited strategic conflict as a "well-defined" problem fought according to well-defined and well-understood rules by well-behaved protagonists. Rather we will think of limited strategic conflict as an extremely messy "bucket of worms" in which the perceptions and motivations of both sides are probably undergoing continuous revision and change as both look for an acceptable way out of an extremely dangerous and nasty situation.

For this analysis, at least, we can think of limited strategic conflict as a direct conflict between the U.S. and Soviet Union in which important issues are at stake on both sides. Direct military actions are involved, probably nuclear, and possibly against the respective homelands of both sides. I say "probably nuclear and possibly against the homeland" because these are the cases of greatest interest for planning purposes, and the ones which get the most attention. From the point of view of information and decisionmaking problems, however, a limited conflict

involving nuclear strikes against homelands may not be very distinguishable from one involving limited coercive nuclear strikes against theatre forces or other overseas assets, or even from a conflict fought solely with coercive applications of conventional forces in which escalation to nuclear levels is avoided.

This illustrates, perhaps, the difficulties in trying to precisely define a concept like limited strategic conflict. At first blush, it might appear that the best way to go about that task would be to pick some clear-cut attribute--like the use of central force weapons by one party against the other's homeland--and define limited strategic conflict as conflict having that attribute. When we begin to look at questions of capability, however, particularly information and decisionmaking capability, it becomes obvious that that approach is inadequate. Any time an initial use of central force weapons against the opponent's homeland is considered, it will be along with a range of other options involving nuclear or conventional strikes against other targets, and possibly some purely diplomatic actions as well. Many of the important informational questions, and indeed questions about capabilities generally, arise at this point--before the decision is made. It seems inappropriate, therefore, to limit consideration to situations in which the decision went a particular way rather than to the overall decision situation.

As a working definition, then, we can think of limited strategic conflict as direct military conflict between the U.S. and Soviet Union involving at least the serious implicit threat of nuclear weapons use against the homelands. This would allow for the lesser possibilities of conventional and/or third area nuclear strikes. Even then, we should remember that many of the important questions arise in a severe confrontation with the potential for escalating to limited strategic conflict, whether or not that escalation actually takes place. The Cuban Missile crisis is probably the closest we've come to limited strategic conflict, and is in many ways an important paradigm for such conflict. It seems useful, nonetheless, to reserve the term "conflict" for situations involving actual military engagements, not merely posturings and high levels of confrontation.

The objectives for which limited strategic conflict might be fought are often described as "limited rather than vital" or "important but not vital." This seems to reflect an assumption that vital interests would require all-out conflict. Since all-out general war would lead to unacceptable levels of damage for both sides, however, that assumption seems difficult to justify. So long as escalation to major levels of violence has not occurred, the prevention of such escalation and of the attendant destruction will itself be a vital interest of both sides. This is true whatever the importance of the other issues at stake. To downplay the importance of the issues which might lead to a limited strategic conflict, therefore, on the grounds that "limited wars are fought for limited objectives" seem unjustified.

One of the central characteristics of limited strategic conflict is likely to be the continuing perception on both sides of a high risk of escalation to unacceptable damage. This continuing perception of high levels of risk has led some to describe limited nuclear attacks as the "least miserable option," and "Russian roulette with three chambers loaded." Minimizing the risks of uncontrolled escalation and getting the conflict stopped at some mutually acceptable stopping point are likely to be major and continuing objectives on both sides. A "final solution" to the underlying dispute, in the sense that victory in World War II provided a "final solution" to the "German problem," is unlikely. Rather, solutions will be temporary expedients, dealing with the immediately crucial issues and passing the underlying differences on to the future. The attitude adopted by national leaders on both sides is likely to be one expressed succinctly by President Kennedy's Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, during a period of repeated and severe U.S.-Soviet confrontation over Berlin. Rusk was reportedly asked if he would like to be known as the Secretary of State who achieved a final resolution of the Berlin problem. He is said to have replied that no, he would rather be one of those who managed to pass the problem along to his successor.

There is a tendency in the defense planning business to think of limited strategic conflict as a "game," entered into rationally and consciously by at

least one of the protagonists and fought by both according to well-defined rules and for well-defined objectives. Such an image may appear to simplify the problems of planning for limited strategic conflict somewhat, but beyond that seems sufficiently unrealistic to have little to recommend it.* In light of the risks and uncertainties involved, it seems difficult to imagine a rational national leader choosing to initiate a limited strategic conflict so long as he could possibly pursue his national interests by less violent means.

This does not imply that limited strategic conflict is impossible, but rather that it is more likely to come about through miscalculation or desperation than through conscious, rational choice. If it occurs, it already represents a failure of policy and perceptions on the part of at least one, and probably both, protagonists. An important consequence of this fact is that the national leaders involved are likely to enter limited strategic conflict with less than their usual faith and trust in their military and foreign policy bureaucracies, and in the ability of those bureaucracies to adequately understand the world and advise them on it. In particular, this means that finely-honed, preplanned options and other forms of pre-canned advice are likely to be viewed with less than enthusiasm, and that a great deal of rethinking and ad hoc reevaluation and planning of new options is likely to be called for at the time.

In particular, limited strategic conflict is unlikely to be fought according to finely-honed rules derived in advance from the kind of theory of conflict as a rational, logical process which so strongly appeals to strategic theorists. Rather, it is likely to be fought more according

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*In its extreme form, this viewpoint sees limited strategic conflict as a positive element of foreign policy, useful for achieving preferred national ends in "less than vital situations." This is the view Bill Jones has characterized as assuming limited strategic conflict has initiated when the national leader on one side wakes up some morning and says to himself, "It's a beautiful day. The sun is shining. The birds are singing. I think I'll have a limited war." (Private Communication)

to the perceptions of the particular national leaders of both sides, of the situation and of the options which their respective military and diplomatic establishments make available to them.

To a far greater extent than is true of more conventional forms of conflict then, limited strategic conflict is likely to be a bargaining process between the respective national leaders. It is a process in which both are concerned with finding a mutually acceptable resolution to whatever underlying issues are, at minimum levels of violence. The definition of "acceptable" is likely to change significantly as the conflict progresses, and may be quite different at termination than it had been at the beginning. The course of the conflict and its eventual outcome will be influenced as at least as much by the individual leaders involved as by the details of the military capability of both sides, or even of the actions taken. This means that there are no military capabilities which can provide any theoretical guarantees of success in a limited conflict, and no force exchange calculations which can be used with any confidence as predictors of success.

We can't even really say, sitting here as peacetime planners, what capabilities might really be "better" in a future limited conflict and what capabilities might not. It seems a priori, for example, that things like greater reliability, higher accuracy, etc., would necessarily be good to have, and this judgment can be superficially supported by showing that such capabilities give one more options, the ability to play better in a variety of limited conflict "games," etc. In a crunch, however, one might be hard put to know what to do if his finely-tuned and highly discriminate limited nuclear option had evoked a crude and messy (though still limited) response from the other side, together with a message that both sides should "knock this crap off before we all get ourselves killed." The crude, messy response might just turn out to be the more successful of the two.

The point of this is simply to note that there are no guarantees of success, nor even clear criteria for "better" in this area. The usual pretense that there are "for planning purposes" may do us a disservice--if it hides some of the real risks and uncertainties which limited strategic conflict holds.

A major role of information in limited strategic conflict is to inform the respective national leaders about the situations facing them, the choices open to them, and the probable outcomes resulting from these various choices. In addition, information serves to inform the various "actors" in the conflict--military organizations on both sides, diplomatic personnel, etc.--of the situation, of actions taken by other actors, and of the consequences of those actions. U.S. military organizations, for example, need information on Soviet and U.S. military actions and their consequences, as well as information about the decisions and actions of the U.S. political leadership--the decisions which determine what their own (military) actions will be. Military commanders and diplomatic cable writers need information about each other's intended actions in order to coordinate the military and diplomatic components of the overall national action.

As was noted earlier, what information is and what it means depends on the context and the interpreter. Thus, institutional biases and blinders do matter in assessing the role of information and how it may be used. So do personalities--most importantly perhaps, the personalities of the President and of the dominant Soviet leader, whatever his title happens to be at the time. Different leaders will differ in the kinds of information they want, the ways they will use it, and the sources they will get it from. Some, for example, might want detailed assessments of the objective military situation, and might base their actions heavily on those assessments. Others might concern themselves more with the motivations and perceptions of their opposite number as an individual, and with trying to second guess the opposite number's actions. President Kennedy, for example, was quite concerned about Khrushchev's personal motivations during the missile crisis, and at one point is reported to have asked his advisors (with reference to Khrushchev) "Why did <u>he</u> do this to <u>me</u>?"

All of this suggests that the "rational actor" model of international behavior, in which nations are viewed as unitary rational decisionmaking entities behaving in a manner which maximizes their expected self-interest, is totally inadequate as a model for limited strategic conflict. In his study of the Cuban missile crisis (Allison 1971) Graham Allison calls this rational actor model Model I, and identifies two additional models of inter-

national behavior. Model II is an "organizational process" model in which national behavior is seen as resulting from the interplay among various organizational actors, such as the military or foreign service, etc. Each is motivated by its own institutional self interest, and views the world from its peculiarly institutionally distorted perspective. Model III he identifies as "bureaucratic politics" model in which these various organizations are thought of as headed by individual leaders whose personal interests, power, preferences, perceptions, etc., play a major role. Thus, Model I views government as a single entity, Model II as a collection of organizations, and Model III as a collection of people. It's clear that all of these models are sometimes useful, but none is truly adequate. What's really going on in governmental decisionmaking is a blend of all three, with the particular blend dependent on the situation and on the actors involved. This process is not adequately describable in formal quantitative terms.

It is a process nonetheless that we can intelligently speculate about and analyze. When we do so, however, it is important that we remember the limits of any formal models we may employ and don't try to apply them too literally. We should treat them rather as partial and incomplete perspectives on the problem of governmental decisionmaking in conflict (in the sense that two-dimensional drawings are incomplete perspectives on three-dimensional objects) and not as surrogates for the problem in the sense that we treat Newtonian mechanics as surrogate for real mechanics (this distinction is discussed in more detail in Strauch, 74).

III. THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

To a far greater extent than is true in other types of international conflict, limited strategic conflict is a contest of will and bargaining skill between national leaderships, with the remaining components of national government and power serving primarily to back up and support their leadership.* The reason for this is that, if it is to truly remain limited, a limited strategic conflict can never be terminated by the imposition of a victor's will and a helpless opponent. Rather, it must be terminated by the mutual agreement of two antogonists each of whom still possesses the capability to wreak large-scale damage on the other. Limited strategic conflict requires decisions by the leadership to engage in such a conflict, decisions about how it should be waged, and finally, a decision that it should be terminated at the particular position and in the particular way in which termination is finally achieved. The nature of the leadership mechanisms involved, then, is an important factor in the conflict process.

Contrary to the assumption frequently made in discussions of international conflict, the national leaderships of the U.S. and Soviet Union are not abstract unitary rational decisionmakers. Rather, they are real institutions, staffed by real people. They do not make "optimal" decisions based on an unambiguous and objective (though perhaps incomplete) understanding of the situation and the options available. Rather, they make what seem to them to be reasonable decisions based on their perceptions and values, and constrained by the nature of the mechanisms by which those perceptions are formed and the decisions made. Given the inherently uncertain and ambiguous nature of limited strategic conflict, these perceptions are bound to be incomplete, biased, and perhaps seriously flawed.

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*The term "national leadership" will be used in this paper in preference to the more formal term "National Command Authorities" because of the tendency of the latter term to convey the idea of a well defined formal structure within which decisions are made smoothly and according to established procedure. The term "national leadership," then, is intended to convey more of a flavor of a looser and more realistic decisionmaking mechanism, rather than that of an ideal system as envisioned by peacetime planners.

This is particularly true with respect to perceptions of the opponent's perceptions, motivation, and intentions, which are always uncertain and subject to serious misinterpretation but which are among the most important factors in limited strategic conflict. The extent to which flaws in perception impact on the outcome of the conflict may vary considerably, depending on how the particular flaws affect the decisions made and actions taken. Decisions based on incomplete or erroneous perceptions do not always turn out badly, however. In the hands of a skillful political leader, in fact, ambiguity and uncertainty can sometimes be put to productive use in bargaining, and hence in achieving an acceptable outcome.*

The perceptions held in a conflict and the decisions resulting from those perceptions will depend strongly on the particular individuals holding positions of national leadership at the time, and there is little that can be usefully said here about future U.S.-Soviet leaders. These perceptions and decisions will also be influenced by differences in the institutional structure of the leadership mechanisms, and of the political structure on which they rest. These differences have potentially important implications for limited strategic conflict behavior, and it is those differences and their implications which we now want to address.

National leadership in the U.S. rests ultimately with one man, the President of the United States. He is elected by the people and is not directly responsible to any party organization or structure. He is both the head of government and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. While there are some checks on his power, he shares it with no one.† The

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*During the Cuban missile crisis, for example, the U.S. received a conciliatory note from the Soviet Union, followed shortly thereafter by a much harsher and more demanding one. Uncertain as to which one really represented Krushchev's position, and somewhat dismayed by the tone of the later one, President Kennedy decided to reply to the first as if the second had not been received, in hopes of maneuvering the Russians away from the second position. The maneuver was successful, and contributed to the resolution of the crisis.

†One of the major checks, perhaps, is the War Powers Resolution of 1973, which limits his authority to engage U.S. forces in combat. The choice of how forces should be used if they are employed, however, remains his, and in any case, the application of the act in a future limited strategic conflict remains uncertain.

decision which he can legally make are decisions he alone is responsible for.

His formal advisory apparatus includes the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the National Security Council and their supporting structures. Presidents tend to utilize this structure in different ways, however, and it is quite possible that the formal structure would be less important than whatever informal advisory mechanism the incumbent President chooses to use. President Kennedy's "Ex-Comm" during the Cuban Missile crisis is a prime example of an informal advisory mechanism whose structure was dictated by the personal style and preferences of an incumbent President, and other examples can be found in other administrations. The information used by the advisory apparatus and the way it is used will depend on both the structure of the apparatus and the background and expertise of the individuals who comprise it.

The ultimate repository of national power in the Soviet Union is not a single individual but a group - the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, acting as a collective. In principle, power within this collective is shared equally, although in practice, some are more equal than others. Power is currently shared far more equally than it was under Khrushchev, however. The current predominance of General Secretary Brezhnev rests more with his ability to balance and manipulate the Politburo than with any ability to dictate to it. No one currently has anywhere near the individual power and authority of the President of the United States, and there are strong internal pressures to prevent any such accumulation of power in the future.

As would be expected with a collective leadership, not all members of the Politburo are equally concerned with all issues. Rather, issues in a particular area, such as defense, are probably normally decided by a subgroup of members concerned with that area, and ratified by the full Politburo. The Politburo as a whole, however, does appear to meet to discuss and decide collectively on issues of major importance. The full Politburo is reported to have met at least four times during the week of the Nixon-Brezhnev summit in 1972 which lead to the Salt I agreement. It also appears that the full Politburo was actively involved in the

Czechoslovakian crisis in 1968, and that the decision to invade was taken by the Politburo as a whole. It seems reasonable to believe that the full Politburo would act in a limited strategic conflict, even if primarily to ratify choices made by a smaller subgroup. Even this, however, is a significantly different mechanism from an individual leader.

INDIVIDUAL VS. COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

The difference between an individual and a collective decisionmaking mechanism has several important implications for decisionmaking in limited strategic conflict. Some of these favor the individual and some the collective.

On the one hand, the individual decisionmaker can be a far more decisive and effective decisionmaking mechanism in crisis. While advice and counsel may be sought from many sources, only one man need ultimately be convinced of the action to be taken. Consensus among his principle advisors is to be desired, but it is not necessary, since he is the final arbiter of any difference of opinion. One man is also easier to inform, and to keep informed, than a larger group, and he can decide more easily on a sequence of follow-on actions based on rapidly changing circumstances.

A group, on the other hand, is an inherently slower and less efficient decisionmaking mechanism. When a decision is required, a quorum must be assembled, or at least brought into communication. Members are likely to have different views of the situation, and hence of what should be done about it. They will also have different information requirements based on those different views, and this will increase the burden on their advisors and intelligence agencies. If the decision is a critical one, as it will be in a limited strategic conflict, members who have not previously taken a strong interest in the problem will suddenly become interested, and will require a rapid education on aspects of the problem they find important. (Possibly different) subgroups will have reservations about or objections to each course of action proposed, making it difficult to get a firm consensus on any particular course of action. As the crisis proceeds, the members will be involved in different

individual activities, making it difficult for advisors to keep them informed of changing circumstances and ready to make follow-on decisions.

The Russians are not unaware of the advantages of an individual leader, and Soviet military writings, in particular, have at times discussed the advantages of a Supreme High Command functioning under a single Commander-in-Chief, along the lines of the World War II Stavka under Stalin. There are strong political pressures against such an arrangement, however, and there is no evidence that these have been overcome and the machinery for a single Commander-in-Chief established. Not the least of these is the fact that the designation, in peacetime, of a single Politburo member (probably Brezhnev) to serve as Commander-in-Chief in a conflict would itself endow him with enough additional influence and power to seriously threaten the system of collective rule under which the Politburo now operates. Elimination of excessive individual power and the establishment of a more collective form of leadership was perhaps the main impetus behind the ouster of Khrushchev in 1964, and most members of the Politburo would be highly reluctant to give up that principle.

There are also advantages to the collective decision process in dealing with a problem as squishy and ill-defined as limited strategic conflict. It is in such poorly understood problem areas that the saying "Two heads are better than one" is most applicable. The advantage to the collective mechanism, then, is that it provides opportunities for a breadth and diversity of view which the individual mechanism may not provide.

The breadth of perception of an individual decisionmaker varies widely from decisionmaker to decisionmaker. If the U.S. President has a broad, open mind he may be able to see the situation from a number of diverse perspectives, and adjust those perspectives as the conflict develops. If he has a narrow, rigid point of view, however, he may focus most heavily on information which reinforces his previously held views, and be unable to readily change his view as the situation changes. He is also, to a considerable extent, a prisoner of his choice of advisors, since they act to filter the information which comes to him and thus to limit his ability to perceive and understand the situation. If he has a rigid,

narrow viewpoint, he may choose advisers who agree with that viewpoint to the exclusion of others. Thus, he is less likely to be presented with views and alternatives which run counter to his prior preferences and beliefs. In terms of an earlier example, he may not have anyone around who will point out that the black object is a jelly bean. The individual decisionmaking mechanism has within it, then, the potential for beginning with a narrow, constrained view of the conflict situation and selectively filtering the available information to continually reinforce that view.

The collective decisionmaking mechanism, on the other hand, has an inherent tendency toward a broader perspective on the issues facing it. The Politburo members have varying interests, constituencies, and perceptions of Soviet national interest. While not all members of the Politburo exercise equal authority in the decisionmaking process, neither are they totally without power, and they exercise a degree of independence and authority which allows them to make their views heard. Even if each of the members individually has a narrow, constrained view of the world, differences between these views are likely to be sufficient to insure that the Politburo as a whole has a broader perspective than any single individual in it. Because the different members will have different constituencies and bases of support, the information available to the Politburo as a whole is less subject to filtering by a few key advisors.

Based on structural considerations then, the Politburo would appear likely to be able to view the conflict more broadly than the Presidency, and to insure itself a broader, more balanced flow of information and perspective. There are other differences between the two systems, however, which would act in the other direction, tending to give the American Presidency a broader, more balanced perspective on the conflict than the Soviet Politburo. Some of these will be discussed below.

The individual nature of the American Presidency means that the decisionmaking behavior of the institution will tend to reflect the personal style of the person occupying it. Thus if the President, as an individual, is predictable or unpredictable, decisive or indecisive, or macho or humane, American actions during a limited conflict will tend in the same direction. The collective nature of the Politburo, however,

will drive it to a more conservative decisionmaking style than that of its principal members as individuals. It will probably be reluctant to take risky action as long as it can be avoided, because of the difficulty of achieving a consensus. Once it appears that action can no longer be avoided, however, the collective decision process may tend in the direction of strong, decisive action rather than small incremental steps. This is because the clumsy nature of the group decision mechanism makes a sequence of incremental decisions, each based on the events preceding it, more difficult to agree on than a single larger decision which may solve the problem once and for all and minimize the need for further debate.

Another difference between the U.S. and Soviet leadership is the relative experience and tenure in office of each. The U.S. President changes at least every 8 years, and more often on the average. The traditional sources of Presidential candidates are the Congress and the governerships of the states. The latter provides Presidents with limited experience in foreign affairs, while the former provides Presidents with little experience in executive management and decisionmaking. A limited strategic conflict early in the term of a new President, therefore, could find him lacking in experience which could be critical to his handling of the conflict. The unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, for example, is sometimes attributed in part to President Kennedy's newness in office.

The Politburo, on the other hand, is a much more long-lived body. With the one-party system prevailing, its members' terms are indefinite, and many have been members for over a decade. Collectively, they have considerable tenure and experience in U.S.-Soviet relations. Even if the primary leader is relatively new to that position, he is likely to have been a Politburo member for some time, and thus experienced in the national level executive decisionmaking process.

Another issue on which the U.S. and Soviet decisionmaking mechanisms differ considerably concerns the change of leadership during the course of a conflict. As a collective body, the Politburo has within its power the ability to override the dominant Soviet leader if the majority of

its members feel such action is warranted, and if necessary, to remove him and to choose a successor. No similar mechanism exists in the United States, where the mechanisms available to remove the President against his wishes are cumbersome and time consuming.* If the President is removed, he is replaced by the incumbent Vice President, and no alternative means of choosing a successor are available.

The question of leadership succession relates to the issue of limited strategic conflict in two important ways. First, the capability to lead a nation into war has always provided overzealous and sometimes unstable leaders with the opportunity of engaging their nation in conflicts not in the nation's objective best interests. Should this occur or begin to occur, the nation's ability to quickly replace the leader in question could be important. This appears to be an ability which the Soviet Union possesses but the U.S. lacks.

Second, it is often the case that a leader who brings a nation into conflict, regardless of how justified that may initially be, is not capable of reaching the compromise with the opponent necessary to achieve termination. Terminating the conflict, then, may require a new national leader. Examples of this phenomenon include the 1954 Indochinese settlement, reached less than two months after Mendès-France came to power in France, and the settlement of France's long war in Algeria, which was possible only after DeGaulle assumed power following the fall of the Fourth Republic in 1958. In U.S. experience, both the Korean and Vietnam wars were terminated by administrations which succeeded those which had initiated them, and which were elected partly on that issue.

Under the assumptions usually made in strategic analysis--that conflicts are fought and terminated by "rational" decisionmakers in "rational" ways--an issue such as leadership succession and its relationship to conflict termination is irrelevant and somehow inappropriate. Those

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*These mechanisms include impeachment and the disability provisions of the 25th Amendment. The former requires impeachment by the House of Representative and a trial in the Senate. The latter requires a declaration by the Vice President and a majority of the Cabinet that the President is unable to discharge his duties, together with a determination by Congress that this is indeed the case if the President disputes the Vice President's declaration.

assumptions are highly artificial, however, and apply only quite loosely to real wars between real nations. If we want to really understand the implications of limited strategic conflict for U.S. national security, we must go beyond them and consider other possibilities.

THE SELECTION AND TENURE OF ADVISORS

National leaders seldom act directly on raw data. Rather, they require interpretation of the data--of what it means, what uncertainties might exist in its meaning, etc. From the leader's point of view, the interpretation he receives is as much a part of his information as is the raw data itself. The advisors who provide that interpretation, therefore, are themselves important information sources. Advisors exist throughout the national systems of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and play a critical role in national perceptions of the world environment in conflict situations. Decisionmakers or managers at one level may be advisors at another, and in some cases advisors have advisors have advisors.... As was noted earlier, limited strategic conflict is a thing without a well-defined objective structure. It may thus appear very different when viewed from different perspectives. The way the U.S. and Soviet Union behave in a limited strategic conflict will depend significantly on the kinds of advice and interpretation which their leaderships receive, and hence upon the nature of their advisors.

Both countries have formal mechanisms for national level advice and decisionmaking. In the U.S., decisions are made by the President, advised by the National Security Council, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, etc. In the Soviet Union, decisions are made by the Politburo, with the advice of the Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Defense. When a crisis actually arises, however, the formal mechanisms, at least in the United States, are frequently supplemented or supplanted by whatever informal mechanisms and arrangements the incumbent President finds himself most comfortable with. I say "at least in the United States" simply because what happens here is more evident, but it seems reasonable to assume that something similar takes place in the Soviet Union.

Though the precise nature of the mechanism employed may differ from President to President, one phenomenon which has occurred repeatedly in the past, and which could be expected to occur in a limited strategic conflict, is that of the President drawing around him a close group of advisors and confidants in whose judgment he has personal faith and trust. Kennedy's "Ex-comm" during the Cuban missile crisis is a prime example of this phenomena. The groups may include men whose official position and title confer that role on them as part of the formal mechanism, such as the Secretaries of State and Defense. It is also likely to include men whose formal positions give them no presidential advisory role on national security, and indeed who may not even be members of the executive branch or of the government. In two out of the last four administrations, for example (Kennedy and Nixon), the Attorney General has played a significant role in crisis decisionmaking by virtue of his intimate personal relationship with the President. Lyndon Johnson frequently sought advice on Vietnam from a Supreme Court Justice (Abe Fortas).

While there is little in the way of direct evidence, it seems reasonable to assume that an analogous phenomenon occurs in the Soviet Union, with some members of the bureaucracy becoming far more influential in crisis than their formal titles and positions would suggest, because of their particular relationships with men closer to the center of power. At the same time, differences in the two systems would undoubtedly result in differences in the way this phenomenon manifests itself.

In the United States, administrations change every four or eight years, and each change brings with it large turnovers in upper echelon government ranks. Top officials such as the Secretary of State and Defense normally change much more frequently. In and around Washington, there is a large community of people who serve in government at one time or another, and who circulate among law practices, research institutes, and the like while not in government. This community contains a varied and diverse set of experience and viewpoints on national security issues. It represents a significant resource from which a President can draw advice in a crisis. Through it he can, if he wishes, be insured of a wide range of opinion and perspective.

The situation in the Soviet Union is quite different. The government is run by a single Party which has maintained power for over 50 years. Succession at the top takes place far less frequently than it does in the United States, and when it does it is not accompanied by the kind of turnover which accompanies a change in the U.S. Presidency. Upper level officials, in particular, tend to have far greater tenure than do their U.S. counterparts. Brezhnev has held his position since 1964 and has been the dominant Soviet leader since the late 60s. Foreign Minister Gromyko has held his post since the mid 50s. Defense Minister Grechko has been in his position since 1967, after succeeding Malinovsky who held the post for 10 years.

These differences appear to confer both advantages and disadvantages on each side. On the one hand, senior Soviet advisors in a limited strategic conflict are likely to have been in their jobs a long time, and thus to have had considerable experience in dealing with the U.S. and with past crises. Depending on the timing of the crisis, a limited strategic conflict could catch the U.S. with a new President, surrounded largely by new advisors who were still learning the intricacies of their roles and of the game in which they were involved.

The long tenure of the Soviet Minister of Defense, in particular, coupled with the fact that he is chosen from within rather than without the Soviet defense establishment, suggests a considerable stability to Soviet defense doctrine and planning. The more frequent turnover for the U.S. Secretary of Defense, however, and the greater variety of backgrounds from which the Secretary is chosen, suggest greater variation is to be expected in U.S. policies, particularly in areas as subtle and complex as limited strategic conflict. Secretary Schlesinger brought to the job a background in defense-related matters and an appreciation of these subtleties and complexities unequalled by any of his predecessors. That U.S. interest in limited strategic conflict reached its peak during his tenure, therefore, is hardly surprising. The planning begun under his tutelage will last beyond his tenure in office, to be sure, but the emphasis and attention given limited strategic conflict in the future may depend as much on the backgrounds and personalities of incumbent secretaries as on any of the "objective realities" of the world environment.

On the other side of the coin, the long tenure in office for Soviet officials carries with it a tendency to be wedded to the past and to old ideas which the more frequent U.S. turnover may mitigate against. More important, perhaps, the heterogeneous nature of the U.S. political system insures that a range of different perspectives and advice will be available to the U.S. President, should he choose to take it. The closed one-party system of the Soviet Union, on the other hand, means that most of the advisors who can be called on for top-level advice will have come up through essentially the same system and will view the world in a much more homogeneous manner. To the extent that a broad range of perspectives is useful in dealing with a subject as complex as limited strategic conflict then, the U.S. advisory mechanism at the top may be considerably superior. Depending on the President and the way he uses his advisors, this may more than offset the breadth of viewpoint advantages possessed by a collective over an individual leadership discussed earlier.

Broadly informed and knowledgeable advisors are necessary because they can bring with them insight and experience on issues overlooked or not adequately treated in existing doctrine and planning procedures. This is illustrated by an anecdote concerning the selection of the target for the first atomic bomb dropped on Japan in 1945. Lt. Gen. Groves, director of the Manhattan Project, was responsible for the initial target selection. He wanted a city of military importance, not previously damaged by air raids and large enough to contain the effects of the bomb within it. (These last two conditions were to aid in the assessment of the weapon effects.) One of the cities chosen as meeting these criteria was Kyoto. Secretary of War Stimson, on hearing of that choice, vetoed it on the grounds of Kyoto's historic, cultural, and religious importance. He felt that such a choice would be quite inappropriate, and would cause the U.S. trouble and embarrassment after the war. Without his knowledge of Japanese culture and history, Kyoto might have been chosen, to the nation's later regret (Groves, 1962).

IV. NATIONAL PERCEPTIONS

Another common assumption in the strategic literature is the assumption that both nations see the world, and in particular, see the problem of limited strategic conflict, essentially the same way. This assumption appears in its starkest clarity in formal game theoretic representations, where conflict is seen as a well defined mathematical game whose underlying structure is known and understood by both sides.* It is present in less sharply defined form in many far less formal analyses, however. It is present, for example, when the U.S. is assumed able to confidently replicate the Soviet gain-loss calculations, or vice versa, or when both sides are assumed to recognize the same sets of constraints on limited options use, for the same reason.

Like the assumption that both sides are unitary rational decision-makers, it is a highly suspect assumption, used more because analysis would be difficult if not impossible without it than because it can be justified on any empirical grounds. It is, in fact, demonstrably false. The U.S. and Soviet Union view the world quite differently, and they bring to the problem of limited strategic conflict, either as a peacetime planning problem or as an extant conflict which must be dealt with, quite different perceptions, biases, blinders, and mind sets. These will affect the way they perceive of and deal with limited strategic conflict, including their ability to understand the opponent well enough to keep the conflict limited and terminate it on a mutually acceptable basis.

The first hurdle to be crossed in understanding the impact of different national perceptions on the problem of limited strategic conflict is to get rid of the belief that we really understand the problem, i.e., that our conceptualization is uniquely correct, true, objective, or whatever. The problem of limited strategic conflict (like many other problems arising from the U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship) is sufficiently complex to allow it to be seen in various diverse and sometimes apparently

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*This basic assumption is present even when the two sides are assumed to have only incomplete information and perhaps to be maximizing quite different (non-zero) utility function.

contradictory ways, each equally valid in its own terms.* In this sense, it is like Fig. 1, which can be read both down and across with equal validity. The point is not that the other guy's perceptions are "wrong" while ours are "right," or vice versa, but rather that they are different.

Granting that, what do we mean by "national perceptions"? Nations, after all, do not perceive, only individuals perceive, and not all Americans, or all Russians, see the world in the same way. There are probably differences of view within each country which far exceed any systematic differences of view between the two.

There are, nonetheless, systematic patterns in the ways in which important segments of the U.S. and Soviet national security communities view the U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship--patterns which are pervasive enough within those communities to be reasonably thought of as "community perceptions." There are, moreover, clear differences in these patterns between the U.S. and Soviet Union, which affect the way each sees the problem of limited strategic conflict. But perceptions determine the planning done and capabilities acquired for limited strategic conflict in peacetime, and the way those capabilities would be exercised in conflict. Hence the differences matter, and the better we understand them, the better we understand the problem of limited strategic conflict. In any case, understanding some of these differences better should make us more aware of the risks of simply "mirror imaging" our perceptions onto the Soviets in an area as squishy and ambiguous as this one.

This discussion will focus on the perceptions held by and within the defense communities on both sides. Granted, these communities would not be decisive, since the national leadership will make the ultimate decisions in any limited strategic conflict. Those decisions, however, will be constrained and influenced by the military capabilities available and by the advice and interpretation of information provided by the defense community through its senior members. These, in turn, will be strongly dependent on the perceptions of the community before the conflict as well as during it.

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*See (Strauch, 1974), pp. 41-65, for additional discussion of this point.

The most clearly relevant difference between U.S. and Soviet perceptions is in the views held by each of limited strategic conflict, as reflected in their respective strategic doctrines and declaratory policies. The U.S., after a long period of strong focus on massive exchange as the only strategic scenario of interest, is showing increasing interest in limited strategic conflict as a concept worth serious consideration in strategic planning. Soviet strategic doctrine, on the other hand, continues to adhere to the long-held view that strategic conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union could not be limited, but would necessarily escalate into a full-scale strategic exchange.

U.S. doctrine holds that such an exchange represents a supreme failure of national policy, and that the resulting levels of damage would be such as to render the concept of "victory" a meaningless one. Accordingly, U.S. doctrine has focused primarily on "deterrence" of such a conflict, rather than on the problems of fighting one. Soviet doctrine, on the other hand, holds that, while strategic war would be damaging, it remains ultimately a political act, in which "victory" remains possible and worth striving for. As a result, the Soviet Union has not neglected the problems of nuclear war fighting, but has developed a theory of victory and war fighting doctrine to achieve that victory.

This doctrine calls for massive spoiling attacks on U.S. forces and war-making capabilities to hamper and break up the U.S. offensive once it becomes clear that war is inevitable. If it actually followed in a limited conflict situation, it would produce massive escalation and make limitation impossible. Whether it would actually be followed or not is, of course, undecidable at this time. Differences in U.S. and Soviet strategic doctrine as it relates to limited strategic conflict are addressed in (Lambeth, 1975), and will not be discussed in any detail here. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that these differences in doctrine result from, and reflect, very basic differences in the way problems of strategic conflict and the U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship are perceived, and that some of these perceptional differences may be far deeper and more significant than the more obvious differences in enunciated doctrine.

One major difference is that each nation sees itself as the peace-loving defender of a good and just social order and sees the other as an unprincipled and aggressive threat to that order, at least for military planning purposes. This predisposes each to think of the other's actions as motivated by aggressive intent, recognized as such by the "aggressor." The possibility that he might engage in what looks like an aggressive act for reasons he views as defensive are not considered. This perspective, of a black and white world in which the opponent is all black, is an acceptable one for military planning purposes, and is even a reasonable one from which to engage in military action designed to decisively defeat the opponent. It is not a useful one, however, from which to engage in limited strategic conflict, where compromise with the opponent is required for settlement. To the extent that the two sides hold these views during conflict, then, successful resolution without escalation will be difficult.

Another major perceptual difference is the American tendency to view things as problems in isolation, to be dealt with separately and apart from "everything else." This is in contrast to the Soviet tendency to see problems as part of a larger framework. This difference can be caricatured in terms of the "national games" of the two societies--poker and chess. In poker each hand is scored separately, and is won or lost by itself. Whatever the past and the future of the game, therefore, it's always worthwhile to win a particular hand. In chess, on the other hand, the individual moves count for little except as part of a larger overall pattern. The worth of a particular move can thus be seen only in the context of the larger sequence of which it is a part. To evaluate a move in isolation is pointless.

In another analogy to illustrate this difference, Goldhamer compares military power with money in the bank (Goldhamer, 1971). The United States, he suggests, acquires military power to achieve particular objectives--deterrence of nuclear war, deterrence of attack on NATO, etc. This is very much like the saver who puts money in the bank to some specific end, such as saving for a new car or television set. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, acquires military power because military power is a useful

thing to have in an uncertain world. Even if they cannot be seen clearly in advance, opportunities will arise in the future where power possessed can be exploited. This is more like the saver who saves because a savings account is a nice cushion, and because there may be sales in the future where the savings can be put to good use.

This tendency is evident in perceptions of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance. American planners tend to view the balance in terms of the strategic force postures of each side--throw weight, number of boosters, accuracy, etc. and to measure the balance by comparing strategic forces either directly or through the medium of force exchange analysis. They see strategic balance as an isolated issue, separable from other interactions between the two countries. Soviet planners, on the other hand, view the strategic balance in terms of a "correlation of forces" which includes but is not limited to the factors considered important by American planners. It also includes other types of military force (such as general purpose forces) as well as various political, economic and social factors. The strategic balance viewed this way is less amenable to quantitative analysis and comparison. This view, however, keeps the viewer sensitized to aspects of the problem which the former viewpoint tends to suppress.

Just how these differences might manifest themselves in limited strategic conflict, and the impact they would have, is a matter which can only be speculated on. One possibility which suggests itself is that of greater U.S. concern with the favorable resolution of the immediate conflict at issue, and a greater Soviet concern with the place of that conflict in a broader and longer flow of events. In particular, this suggests that the Soviet Union might exhibit a greater willingness to back down and accept an unfavorable settlement, viewing it as a temporary tactical setback which would be corrected in time. This type of behavior, in fact, has been typical of the Soviet Union in the past. The U.S., on the other hand, might have a greater tendency to become "locked in " to a particular position, even to the point of sacrificing long term U.S. interests in order to try for a "win" in the dispute at hand. Some observers might argue that the U.S. participation in the Vietnam war for so long, in fact, was an example of this type of behavior.

A related difference is the U.S. tendency to want to see problems in terms of their tangible, and if possible quantifiable, components. The Soviets, on the other hand, seem more willing to grant a significant role to intangibles. This difference is evidenced in the U.S. penchant for quantitative analysis of all manner of national security problems. In such analysis, the problem is seen only in terms of its tangible components such as force sizes and technical characteristics, or in terms of pseudo-tangible quantitative measures of effectiveness such as division firepower scores.

The difference can be seen clearly in the images the two sides hold of a large-scale strategic conflict. In the U.S., such a conflict is seen as a stereotyped exchange of the strategic arsenals of both sides. The course and outcome of the exchange are determined by force characteristics such as numbers, yields, accuracies, by the ability to use certain clear-cut types of information such as empty-hole information (which enemy missiles have been fired) or bomb damage assessment information in a predetermined stereotyped manner; and by target characteristics such as hardness, population at risk, and predicted effectiveness of the defenses. The use of the forces during the conflict is seen as following well-defined rules describable in advance, and human judgment, emotion, will, morale, etc., are not given any identifiable role.

In Soviet thinking, on the other hand, factors such as training, morale, and having a just cause are seen as important. The exchange is not seen as automatically playing out its predetermined course. Rather, stress is laid on the importance of Soviet initiative to disrupt and frustrate the U.S. attack and destroy the U.S. will to fight. Also, the war is seen as a political act serving political ends, rather than as a purely military contest isolated from all political context.

I have argued elsewhere (Strauch, 1972) that the U.S. viewpoint is an inappropriate one from which to attempt to conduct a limited strategic conflict, because it fails to take into account the inherently political nature of the process. I am not suggesting here that the Soviet image is any better. It too, has serious flaws, such as belief in the inevitability of escalation or the belief that a massive nuclear exchange

could be a meaningful political act. The point here is that these images reflect quite different ways of viewing the world, and that these differences may affect the abilities of the two countries to engage in limited strategic conflict without escalation to levels unacceptable to both.

All this suggests, in any case, that the two sides are likely to perceive the conflict quite differently, and hence to be playing two very different "games" in their behavior in it.

It suggests, in particular, that we be very careful about placing confidence in "theories" of limited strategic conflict which suggest that both sides will observe particular restraints, launch strikes to attack particular objectives, capitulate in particular circumstances, etc. An underlying assumption in all such theories which seems unlikely to hold as even a close approximation to reality is that both sides perceive the same set of issues and are in fact playing the same "game." It seems evident, even from the cursory assessment made here, that this is not likely to be the case.

It may be, in fact, that the tendency to derive and speculate about rational theories of limited strategic conflict is itself an American predilection not likely to be shared by the Soviets. One reaction evinced by Soviet strategists in the past to such theories has been that it was evidence of American immaturity and lack of realism about the nature and destructiveness of war. They attribute this, in part, to the fact that the U.S. has not suffered war damage on its soil for a century nor war damage at the hands of a foreign attacker for two centuries (they seem to neglect the War of 1812). (Nimitz, 1975)

FACTORS INFLUENCING PERCEPTIONS

The background and experience of the people involved, of course, is a significant factor in the national perceptions of both sides. The fact that the Soviet Union has experienced major war on its soil within the memory of most influential members of the Soviet defense establishment, while U.S. wars have been elsewhere, may allow U.S. analysts to view war with more detachment and abstraction than their Soviet counterparts.

There are, undoubtedly, other basic cultural differences which affect U.S. and Soviet perceptions. There are also differences in the makeup of the two defense communities and in the larger systems with which they interact which contribute to some of the differences in perception noted above.

Many key personnel in the U.S. defense establishment come from a civilian intellectual rather than a military background. They view defense policy and decisionmaking as essentially intellectual activities, similar to those that they were trained for and employed in at universities. This training and background predisposes them toward thinking in abstract, logical, and heavily quantitative terms. They lean naturally toward the type of perceptions described above, the isolation of problems from any surrounding context, the heavy emphasis on the tangible and quantitative aspects of a problem, etc. They shy away from intangibles such as morale and military leadership for a number of reasons. Not only are such things intangible and difficult to quantify, but the analysts have no experience with them and so do not understand them. Further, to admit the importance of such factors would be to diminish the importance of their own methodologies, which cannot deal with them. This type of thinking has been dominant in the U.S. defense community long enough that it has also had a significant impact on the thought and perceptual patterns of military planners and managers as well, leading them to adopt a similar perspective.

Soviet defense planners, on the other hand, come almost exclusively from an operational military background. They have less experience in dealing with theoretical models and abstractions, and more with troops, command structures, and operational weapons systems. This experience conditions their perceptions far differently than does that of their U.S. counterparts. In particular, they have had firsthand experience with intangibles like morale and leadership, and consider them real in a way that a civilian without that experience cannot. Moreover, they live in an environment which supports and reinforces those perceptions, rather than denying them as the U.S. environment does.

National perceptions are formed not only by the people involved, but also by the aids and procedures those people use. Another factor

contributing to U.S.-Soviet perceptual differences is the far more extensive use of computer technology in the United States.

The U.S. has a clear lead over the Soviet Union in computer technology. The number and sophistication of installed computers in the United States greatly exceeds that of the Soviet Union and the U.S. computer technology leads Soviet technology by between 5 and 10 years (Turn & Nimitz, 1975). While the gap in military computational capability may not be as great as the overall computer gap, it seems clear that a significant gap does exist.

In the U.S., applications of computers in areas related to limited strategic conflict are increasing. Sensor systems such as DSP and BMEWS require large amounts of computation to convert their raw data into information meaningful to human beings. Even the interpretive functions of deciding when a threat exists and determining the warning level associated with the threat are automated. Automated command and control systems such as the SAC SATIN IV system help keep track of and direct the forces which would be used in a limited strategic conflict. The World Wide Military Command and Control System (WWMCCS) is becoming increasingly automated, and plans exist for increasing standardization of computers and software across commands and functions. Outside the Department of Defense, the Federal Preparedness Agency maintains extensive automated damage assessment capabilities which would be used to keep track of and assess damage to the U.S. in a limited conflict, or to provide the national leadership with estimates of the possible extent and impact of civil damage from projected Soviet strikes.

The use of computers in national security planning and decision support functions provides capabilities which would otherwise not exist. Computers are not, however, an unmixed blessing, and increasing adoption of automated information systems is not without risk. Particularly in the case of systems which would be exercised in a limited strategic conflict, a great deal may depend upon their being able to perform adequately in their first real use. No matter how thoroughly a system has beeen exercised in advance, this first operational use will involve surprises, simply because our first limited strategic war, if there is one, will

involve surprises. As a result, demands may be made which were not previously imposed by system check-out or exercises, and the possibility exists that the system will fail to perform properly. In view of the highly uncertain nature of limited strategic conflict, in fact, this is not the only risk associated with the automation of limited strategic conflict functions. The system could do precisely the job it was designed to do, and that could turn out to be the wrong job.

Large computer programs, such as those supporting automated command and control systems, contain millions of instructions written by perhaps hundreds of programmers over a period of years. By the time a system is operational, most of the original personnel have gone, and there may be no one around who really understands the full program (Weizenbaum, 1972). Check-out will catch most of the bugs, but there are always likely to be branches of the program which have never been exercised nor fully checked out. If the program happens down one of these branches and it contains an error, malfunction can occur.

In most systems which operate on a day-to-day basis, this causes no major problem. The performance of the system can be monitored, and when a malfunction occurs, the error may be located and corrected and the system put back into service with no major harm done. Occasionally the results of malfunction may be spectacular. In 1971 the French weather satellite EOLE inadvertently destroyed more than 100 weather balloons through a "programming error." As the command and control of increasingly complex strategic systems becomes increasingly automated the possibilities for malfunction as a result of software error increase. These possibilities are often ignored or downplayed when the enhanced capabilities likely to result from automated systems are touted.

Even if such systems perform exactly as their designers intended, they cannot necessarily be considered successful. That "the plans are the first casualty" is a time-honored maximum war, and is likely to be at least as true in the future as it has been in the past. Limited strategic conflict, should one occur, will be a unique event, outside the bounds of previous experience. The course of the conflict and the factors impinging on the decisions made in its management are likely to be considerably

different from those envisioned by planners before it occurs. To the extent that automated command and control systems are designed to deal with conflict as envisioned by peacetime planners and designers, they could prove woefully inadequate even though they performed exactly as anticipated.

That limited strategic conflict, if it occurs, will be different from what planners and command system designers envisioned in advance is itself not surprising. This has happened repeatedly throughout the history of warfare, and armies and nations have adapted to new situations when they occurred. The introduction of automated systems, however, carries with it a new set of risks. Human decision and command and control systems are inherently flexible and capable of adapting to new and unanticipated situations. This is because human beings, themselves, have these qualities. People can consider new information and reassess past positions and judgments on the basis of that information. (This is not to imply, of course, that they always do.) Automated systems, on the other hand, are inherently less flexible. They are inherently unable to consider information for which no provision was made by the programmer, and will interpret information fed into them in the light of their programmed internal model no matter how ludicrous that interpretation might appear to a sentient observer in the light of the existing situation or other available information. They really do behave, in other words, like Lucy with the jelly bean. A failure to adequately anticipate the demands which a future limited conflict would place on a system, therefore, could be far more serious for an automated system than for a manual one, with the amount of potential risk increasing with the degree of automation.

Speaking more broadly and philosophically, there is another risk associated with the increasing automation of the national security planning process. This is the risk that the people themselves, the humans in the system, will eventually come to think too much like computers. Computers deal with numbers, or at least with information coded in numerical form. The only problems that computers can handle, therefore, are well-defined, quantitative problems. As national security planners come to rely increasingly upon computers, they are subject to a subtle but increasing pressure

to structure their images of the problems with which they deal in ways which make those problems appear quantifiable. There are pressures and imperatives to neglect or set aside unquantifiable considerations which would otherwise get in the way of "clean" analysis. The result is that highly subjective and value-laden political and behavioral questions are often treated as if they were objective questions of fact which could be decided on the basis of numerical computation.

The problems of limited strategic conflict are squishy and complex. Dealing with them requires a careful and judicious balancing of many interrelated considerations, many of which are not easily quantifiable. How well this balancing job is ultimately performed depends on the wisdom and the skill of the decisionmakers and advisors who must do it. How they perform in turn is influenced by the perceptions and images which they, and the larger national security planning community of which they are a part, hold of these problems. Understanding international conflict and understanding analytic or computer models of such conflict may be two very different skills. Contemporary experience increasingly revolves around the latter. If we fail to distinguish sufficiently between the two, we may create and reinforce an environment in which the incentives and reward mechanisms increasingly favor those who derive their understanding of international conflict from such models and increasingly exclude those who understand conflict in other ways. To the extent that such models may not be adequate to deal with the complexities and subtleties of limited strategic conflict, we may degrade our national capability to deal with such conflict in the process.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Limited strategic conflict, if it occurs, will place previously unanticipated demands on the military forces of both sides. The ability of those forces to adapt rapidly and appropriately to those demands, therefore, will be important. Once conflict begins, then, the ability to modify institutional perceptions to adapt to a new situation will be required.

The Russians have not, in general, shown themselves to be particularly flexible or adaptable in dealing with previously unanticipated situations.

There are numerous reports, for example, of Russian confusion and lack of initiative during the 1941 German invasion. Even on an individual level, Russian adaptability and initiative is often lacking. Russian pilots, for example, tend to become confused and to respond poorly to situations outside the scope of their previous training and experience. How well the Soviet military would adapt to the demands of limited strategic conflict, therefore, seems problematical. On an individual basis, Americans are probably far more flexible and adaptable. Institutionally, however, the U.S. record of military flexibility and adaptability, particularly in terms of sensitivity to larger political issues, is not all that great either. Many observers attribute the lack of U.S. success in Vietnam to the inability of the U.S. Army as an institution to adapt to the realities of the military/political conflict which it found itself involved in there--a conflict which required military doctrine and operations far different from the conventional large unit operations to which the Army devoted the bulk of its military effort (Jenkins, 1970). During the Cuban missile crisis the tactical air command seemed unable to understand the political distinction between a limited strike on the missile sites and a far larger and broader attack. As a result, the response Kennedy got to his request for plans for a limited strike on the missiles was in effect a full-blown counterforce attack on Cuba, appropriate as a pre-invasion attack but not for the limited purposes he had in mind. Years later one of the members of the Ex-Comm who had favored the air strike at the time still felt that it would have been the best option and attributed its rejection to the military's inability to come up with an appropriate plan.

> The more serious discussion of the alternatives--destroying the weapons or pressure for their removal by a naval blockade of the island--convinced me that the former was the necessary and only effective method of achieving our purpose. Yet the narrow and specific proposal, pressed by some of us, constantly became obscured and complicated by trimmings added by the military. To the proposal of immediate and simultaneous low-level bombing attacks on the nuclear installations, some wished to add bombing of airfields, S.A.M. sites, and fighter aircraft; and others, the landing of ground troops to assure that the missiles were destroyed or removed. (emphasis added) (Acheson, 1969)

This feeling of military insensitivity to the larger issues involved is also reflected in Robert Kennedy's description of President Kennedy's impressions of the military advice he received during the crisis.

> ...but he was distressed that the representatives with whom he met, with the notable exception of General Taylor, seemed to give so little consideration to the implications of the steps they suggested. They seemed always to assume that the Russians and Cubans would not respond or, if they did, that a war was in our national interest. (emphasis added) (Kennedy, 1969, page 119).

A similar impression marks his description of the National Security Council meeting at which final arguments for the blockade vs. the military attack were discussed.

> The discussion, for the most part, was able and organized, although like all meetings of this kind, certain statements were made as accepted truisms, which I, at least, thought were of questionable validity. One member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for example, argued that we could use our nuclear weapons, on the basis that our adversaries would use theirs against us in an attack. I thought, as I listened, of the many times I had heard the military take positions, which, if wrong, had the advantage that no one would be around at the end to know. (emphasis added) (Kennedy, 1969, page 48).

It may be, in fact, that the Soviet military, as a result of the ubiquitous Party presence and their general tendency to view military forces in terms of the "correlation of forces," are better prepared to view military options as part of a larger context than is the U.S. military.

V. SOCIETAL DIFFERENCES

Another implicit assumption usually made in strategic analysis which obscures potentially significant U.S.-Soviet differences is the assumption that strategic conflict is a process involving governments and military forces, with the civil society entering only as targets. There are major societal differences between the U.S. and Soviet Union. The U.S. is a free, open, and pluralistic society, while the Soviet Union is closed and totalitarian. These differences affect the prewar policy formulation and planning process in the two nations in significant ways, and would have important effects in an actual limited strategic conflict, should one occur.

AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

One of the most obvious differences is in the amount of information openly available in each country. The U.S. is an open society, in which information tends to be publicly available unless a conscious decision is made to suppress it (and often, even then). In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, information tends to be automatically suppressed unless a conscious decision is made to make it available. The result is that large masses of U.S. information are available to the Soviet Union for exploitation, both for peacetime planning and during a limited strategic conflict, for which no Soviet counterparts are available to the U.S. In addition, what Soviet information is available is far more subject to Soviet government control, hence more subject to disinformation manipulation, than is its U.S. counterpart.

The Soviet press is an organ of the government, and what is printed or broadcast is subject to government control and manipulation. The U.S. press, on the other hand, is a vigorous and independent entity with a system of nationwide and worldwide information collection and communication facilities rivaling and in some areas surpassing those of the national government. It considers the collection and publication of news to be an almost sacred responsibility, which must be pursued as vigorously as possible. In particular, it does not feel bound by governmental preferences

concerning secrecy of information, and devotes considerable effort to uncovering and publicizing things the government would prefer to keep secret.

During peacetime, then, prior to any limited strategic conflict, the U.S. press (including highly specialized journals such as Aviation Week) can be a useful source of information for the Soviets on U.S. military capabilities, policy deliberations within the U.S. government, attitudes of the U.S. population, and perhaps other matters as well. The Soviet press, on the other hand, is of much more limited value to the U.S., primarily as a source of information on the face which the Soviet government wants to present to the Soviet public and to the world.

During a limited strategic conflict, the U.S. press would be a significant source of information to both sides, but particularly to the Soviet Union. In the event of a limited strategic attack on the United States, the first imagery available from the target area might well come from helicopter-borne television camera crews. This imagery and subsequent news reporting of the nature and extent of the damage would be readily available to both sides. The press would also serve as a major source of information (again to both sides) on the reaction of the U.S. population and of state and local governments to the situation. It might also carry reports of the degree of dissension or cohesion within the U.S. government, or perhaps between the U.S. and its allies, or other such items of information of potential value to the Soviet Union. This sort of information, however, is more subject to manipulation than is straight news reporting of damage, hence is less reliable. In both countries the press would serve as a major channel of communication between the government and the population, with the difference being that the Soviet government could exercise considerably more control over its channel than could the U.S. government.

Another significant source of information in the U.S. for which no comparable Soviet counterpart exists is the vast U.S. open literature of technical studies and reports, company and industry studies, congressional hearings, and the like. In addition to providing information on U.S. policy and military capabilities, this literature can provide detailed information on U.S. industry and the structure of the U.S. economy. This

type of information can be of value in identifying targets for limited strikes and in assessing the probable effects of limited strikes. While U.S. analysts concerned with attacks on the Soviet electric power industry, for example, must depend primarily on technical intelligence data, their Soviet counterparts may draw on utility companies' annual reports as well as on studies of the U.S. electric system done by the utilities, by academics, and even by government. Finally, if they need more detailed information about a particular location, they can even send someone on a guided tour in some cases.

Societal differences also have a major effect on the nature of the national debates concerning limited strategic conflict capabilities. In the Soviet Union that debate is also closed--taking place primarily within the Ministry of Defense and other national security-related government and Party institutions. In the United States, on the other hand, the debate is far more open. In addition to the Defense Department and Executive branch of government, it involves the Congress, academics and, to some extent, the press and public as well. Much of the debate is classified and takes place within the Executive branch, to be sure, but even the classified debate is influenced by the fact that it is part of a larger debate involving these other audiences and constituencies. Even within the Executive branch, the participants in the debate possess a heterogeneity of background and interests not found among their Soviet counterparts. This probably results in a far more vigorous and challenging debate in the U.S. than in the Soviet Union, and could lead to a better understanding of the issue of limited strategic conflict for the United States. The reason for this is that the more vigorous, open debate leaves less chance that weak assumptions will be allowed to stand unchallenged and inadequate understandings will be papered over.

Another significant asymmetry between the U.S. and Soviet Union is in the ease with which each may establish clandestine assets within the other's country. The Soviet Union is a closed society which exercises a great deal of control over its population, and which imposes severe restrictions on internal communications and movement. The United States, on the other hand, is an extremely open society in which the population

has almost complete freedom to move around the country, and can communicate freely from one area of the country to another. The internal security apparatus in the Soviet Union makes it far more difficult for the U.S. to implant or recruit agents within the Soviet Union than it is for the Soviet Union to do the same thing in this country. Even once that is done, however, the utility of having the same freedom and flexibility of movement as an ordinary citizen of the country is much greater in the U.S. than in the Soviet Union.

To be useful in a limited strategic conflict, clandestine agents need not have direct access to sensitive government information. Soviet agents in the U.S. could contribute significantly to target planning, for example, by making on-the-spot surveys or taking public tours at potential economic target locations. Agents owning or having access to private aircraft could perform low altitude photo reconnaissance over most areas of the country in peacetime, and could provide rapid bomb-damage assessment information during wartime. The political nature of a limited strategic conflict is such that embassies in both countries would probably continue to operate during a limited conflict. This would provide agents in place with direct and rapid access to Moscow through the U.S. telephone system into the embassy, and then via embassy circuits to Moscow.

That the Soviets may be better informed about U.S. perceptions and intentions than the converse is not necessarily totally disadvantageous to the United States. It can be quite important, in a limited conflict, to have one's opponent understand one's position thoroughly, so that he does not miscalculate to the detriment of both. Marchetti and Marks (1974) describe a situation in which it was to the U.S. advantage in a crisis that the Soviet Union had a well-placed clandestine agent within the U.S. government. At the time of the Berlin crisis in 1961, they report, U.S. intelligence analysts estimated that the Communists were toughening and unlikely to back down. That estimate, together with information that the U.S. was resolute and would stand firm anyway, was probably passed to the KGB by Lt.Col. W. H. Whalen, an Army Intelligence officer on the Joint Staff. On the basis of this report, Soviet leaders realized that the U.S. government would not back down in spite of U.S. estimates of Soviet

intransigence. In the face of this information, the Soviet leaders softened and the crisis was resolved.

RESPONSIVENESS TO THE PUBLIC

Another major U.S.-Soviet difference relates to the responsiveness of the national leadership to the "will of the people" in each nation. The Soviet leadership governs without the "consent of the governed." The leadership is distrustful of the people and feels that it is the government's place to control, rather than to be controlled by, the population. The Soviet population has no voice in the making of policy, and no power to influence the makeup or tenure of the government. Moreover, it expects none. The Soviet leadership, then, can make policy in peacetime, and make decisions in crisis or conflict, largely independent of any direct consideration of the opinions or preferences of the Soviet people.

The situation in the U.S., on the other hand, is considerably different. The President is elected by the people and will be responsive to the popular will to a far greater extent than are his Soviet counterparts. Significant segments of the U.S. public are used to expressing their views on policy, and expect those views to be heard. This is true both in the peacetime policymaking process, and to a lesser extent, during crisis situations. The direct effect of public or interest group opinion on crisis decisionmaking is likely to be marginal, in the sense that the President is likely to be guided more by his perceptions of the national interest than by his perception of the national will. The indirect effect of public opinion on Presidential perception of the situation and of his alternatives in that situation may be considerable, however. The timing of a crisis relative to U.S. Presidential or even Congressional elections could also have an effect on U.S. behavior during a severe crisis, with the President generally feeling himself to have greater freedom of action immediately following an election than shortly before one.

Whether the public pressure would be in the direction of forceful action or restraint would depend in part on how the public viewed the issue which precipitated the conflict, and how strongly they supported

the administration's desire to pursue the conflict. If the cause were a popular one and the President were seen as upholding legitimate U.S. interests, the public reaction would be likely to be supportive. Public opinion could, in such circumstances, make a President react more forcefully than he might in the absence of such pressure.

President Kennedy, for example, was deeply concerned about an adverse public reaction to the knowledge that there were Russian missiles in Cuba, after he had strongly stated in public that such missiles were not there and would not be allowed. His concern over the public and congressional reaction to the Soviet emplacement of missiles, in fact, appears to have been a major factor in his decision that the missiles must not remain in place. This was in spite of the advice of Secretary of Defense MacNamara that their presence only hastened a movement toward equality in the strategic balance which was bound to come about anyway, so that they were of no major strategic significance.

On the other side of the coin, lack of perceived public support could be a strong dampening influence, particularly if the primary U.S. objective in the conflict was one of maintaining national prestige and influence rather than avoiding the loss of specific territory. Even if a President felt that pursuing particular conflict to a favorable conclusion were the best course of action from the standpoint of the abstract national interest, he might be reluctant to do so if he felt this were likely to result in his replacement in the next election by an isolationist administration likely to undo his gains anyway.

SOCIETAL DISRUPTION

Limited strategic conflict is an event without close parallels in past human history. The effects of such a conflict, then, on the human societies involved in it, are uncertain and unpredictable. The possibility exists, in particular, that a limited strategic conflict would cause societal disruption far beyond what might be predicted on the basis of the levels of damage suffered alone, up to, and perhaps including, irreparable breakdown of the existing social order. Because of differences in culture and social system, the United States appears more susceptible to

significant societal disruption than does the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, however, may run a greater risk of irreparable societal breakdown, or at least it may appear so to Soviet leaders.

Nuclear war is something most Americans don't think about very much. When they do, however, the general image is one of massive levels of destruction. Individuals see themselves almost certain to be killed if their city or town is attacked, and see a strong possibility of that happening. These images and fears are not normally given much thought, because nuclear war is a remote and unreal possibility. The first detonation of a nuclear weapon in the U.S., however, could bring them quickly to full consciousness. The credibility of government assurances that the conflict would remain limited might be low, particularly if a high level of distrust of the government existed at the time. Any damage which had been done would receive widespread press coverage, in gory living color, as would the opinions of opposition spokesmen and others who felt the government was "trying to get us all killed."

Americans are a fairly independent people, used to deciding for themselves what is in their best interests, and not accustomed to following government advice if they deem it not in their best interests. If large numbers decided to hoard food or gasoline, stay home from work, or leave the city they could cause significant disruptions in normal social and economic patterns. Though it stayed within manageable levels, behavior of this type did occur during the Cuban missile crisis, when people mobbed food stores buying up large amounts of canned goods (and in some cases, frozen foods). One can also imagine the absenteeism in, say, the petroleum industry, if a refinery were hit or if refineries were identified as prime targets.

The U.S. has a free market economy, with supply and demand relationships, and prices, which depend significantly on people's expectations of a continuing stable society in which tomorrow will be much like yesterday. These expectations could evaporate at the outset of a limited conflict, and cause major disruption in the economic system, perhaps to the point of chaos.

While good government handling could ameliorate these problems somewhat, it is doubtful that it could completely eliminate them. The control mechanisms available to the U.S. government are limited, particularly for exercising a high level of widespread control on short notice. The probability of some significant societal disruption seems high, therefore, and the possibility of serious disruption cannot be ruled out.

In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, government control is ubiquitous and effective. The population are used to following government directives to a degree most Americans would find intolerable. Government control of the information media would allow the government to control what most of the population knew about the conflict, at least for a while. Government control of the marketplace would prevent breakdown due to hoarding and profiteering. In addition, most of the adult population have experienced and lived through a major war, and the population has been conditioned to think of nuclear war as a calamity which the society can survive. Overall, then, the Soviet Union would appear far more able to avoid or contain the effects of societal disruption than would the U.S.

On the other side of the coin, the Soviet Union may be more vulnerable to irreparable societal breakdown, at least viewed from the perspective of the national leadership. The U.S. is a decentralized society, with most of its subunits (cities, states, industries, etc.) functioning autonomously without direction from the central government. While limited attacks on other areas might disturb this functioning temporarily, after the conflict was over, things should return to normal more or less by themselves. The operation of the existing U.S. social order, in other words, is not critically dependent on the continuing presence and authority of the central government.

In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, the economic and political structure of the society--geographical subunits of government, industry, communications, etc.--functions through a collection of hierarchical institutions which all culminate at the Politburo. Continuing central control of the society, then, is a pervasive and important part of the existing social order, especially when seen from the perspective of the

men at the center. As was noted earlier, this control exists without the consent of the governed, many of whom might prefer something else if they had the chance. If the central control were temporarily interrupted, then, the system might well gravitate in the directions which would make restoration of central control difficult, if not impossible. From the point of view of the national leadership, this would be an extremely disturbing possibility, and might, in fact, loom as one of the more serious risks of limited strategic conflict.

VI. SUMMING UP

No matter how much planning is done in advance and no matter how carefully it is done, limited strategic conflict, if it occurs, will involve surprises and unanticipated ambiguities. The most important factors in successfully coping with these surprises and ambiguities would seem to be the flexibility and adaptability of national security institutions, and the ability of the national advisory and decisionmaking mechanisms to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity. Flexibility and adaptability have never been Soviet long suits, and the U.S. probably has a relative advantage here. At the same time, it is not clear how great this advantage is in absolute terms, since the U.S. military has shown itself to be inflexible and insensitive to broader issues in some past circumstances. While the U.S. military is probably more flexible than the Soviet military, neither side has shown the flexibility or adaptability exhibited by, say, the North Vietnamese or the Israelis.

There are potentially important differences in national perceptions and national decision mechanisms. The U.S. has a greater tendency to focus on immediate problems, while the Soviet Union tends to see things more as part of a long-range big picture. The U.S. has an individual decisionmaker at the top while the Soviet Union has a collective. This implies that the style of Soviet decisionmaking is likely to be more stable and conservative over time, while the U.S. style will be more dependent upon the individual U.S. President. At the same time, the group mechanism may be subject to rapid shifts in crisis, as new factions take power and previous primary members are deposed.

As a result of the one-party system and less frequent political succession, Soviet leaders and advisors tend to have longer tenure and more experience than their U.S. counterparts. Counter-balancing this is the fact that U.S. advisors are drawn from a broader, more heterogeneous population, and have the potential of providing the U.S. President with a broader and more varied viewpoint.

The U.S. is a free and open society, while the Soviet Union is a closed totalitarian society. This asymmetry affects the limited strategic conflict capabilities of the two societies in a number of ways. The openness of the U.S. society means that a number of information sources are available to the Soviet Union for which the U.S. has no Soviet counterparts. We have a large open literature, open public debate, and a vigorous press. The U.S. is also a far more benign environment for the implacement and exploitation of clandestine assets than is the Soviet Union.

The free and democratic nature of U.S. society means the U.S. government is more responsive to its population than is the Soviet government, and has much less control over them. This results in, among other things, the more open debate mentioned above, and the shorter tenure of administrations and less stable national policies. During a conflict the U.S. government would be more responsive to public opinion than would the Soviet Union. Because of the lesser degree of government control, the U.S. society would be relatively more susceptible to societal disruption. At the same time, the U.S. government does not depend on the degree of population control which the Soviet government requires. Hence, the Soviet Union could be more susceptible to an irreparable breakdown in the existing social order.

On balance, there seem to be differences which favor both sides, and no firm basis appears to exist on which to conclude that either side is really much better off than the other. It may be, in fact, that asking which country is "better" able to engage in limited strategic conflict is the wrong question. So long as each side retains the ability to inflict massive and unacceptable damage on the other, limited strategic conflict cannot be a method by which one can impose its will, against the will of the other. Rather, if it occurs and is to be dealt with successfully, limited strategic conflict must be a way of reasoning together to find a mutually acceptable resolution to a mutually dangerous situation. Should a limited strategic conflict occur, it is important that <u>both</u> sides be able to play the game successfully.

Thus, asymmetries which initially appear to confer a one-sided advantage may really be to the advantage of both. The Soviet Union, for example, appears potentially more able to read U.S. intentions than the converse. Superficially, that would seem disadvantageous to the United States. That may not really be the case, however. To the extent that Soviet leaders are highly xenophobic and mistrustful of U.S. intentions, it may be to the U.S. advantage in any limited strategic conflict that those leaders receive continuing and reliable reassurance that the U.S. is not, in fact, planning actions against which they would be better off to pre-empt on a massive scale.

Limited strategic conflict is not, nor is it likely to become in the future, a useful, positive adjunct to the bag of foreign policy tools of either the United States or the Soviet Union. One main reason for this is that it is a very touchy and uncertain business with no guarantees of success possible for either party. Should a limited strategic conflict occur, the outcome would depend on the particular circumstances surrounding that conflict, the particular leaders involved and the particular actions they choose. Flexibility, adaptability and institutional tolerance for ambiguity would be important characteristics in their supporting military organizations. Granting that, however, it is difficult to specify in any detail specific informational capabilities which would make a critical difference, and any attempt to do so is likely to be illusory. Limited strategic conflict is, and must remain, something both sides would undertake only at their peril, and hopefully with full recognition of that fact.

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