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AD-A035 324

THE NEW FLEXIBLE STRATEGIC RESPONSE DOCTRINE  
INSIGHTS FROM CRITICS OF MUTUAL  
ASSURED DESTRUCTION

ARMY WAR COLLEGE STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE  
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA

13 DECEMBER 1976

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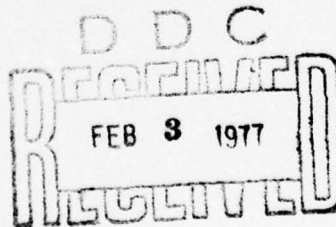
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**THE NEW FLEXIBLE STRATEGIC RESPONSE  
DOCTRINE: INSIGHTS FROM CRITICS OF  
MUTUAL ASSURED DESTRUCTION**

by

**Thomas L. Wilborn**

**13 December 1976**

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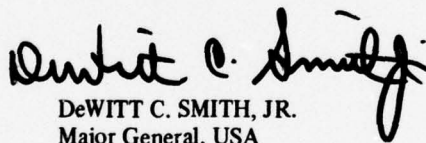
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## FOREWORD

This memorandum considers the "flexible strategic response" doctrine, adopted by the United States in 1974, displacing "assured destruction" as the rationale for nuclear strategy. Through this doctrine, deterrence of a Soviet attack was to be achieved by response with selective strikes commensurate to the provocations. The author states that this significant change in American policy was preceded by an impressive body of literature in scholarly journals, which criticized and proposed alternatives to assured destruction as a guide to US strategic policy. He examines a sample of this literature to explore the meaning of the strategic principles encompassed within the new doctrine. The memorandum also considers the implications of the new doctrine on strategic arms limitations, and the factors which appear to have facilitated the displacement of the assured destruction threat.

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This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



DeWITT C. SMITH, JR.  
Major General, USA  
Commandant

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#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DR. THOMAS L. WILBORN has been with the Strategic Studies Institute since 1974. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree and doctorate in political science from the University of Kentucky. In addition to teaching political science and international relations at Madison College and Central Missouri State University, his professional background includes a position with the University of Kentucky educational assistance program at Bandung, Indonesia.

**THE NEW FLEXIBLE STRATEGIC RESPONSE DOCTRINE:  
INSIGHTS FROM CRITICS OF MUTUAL ASSURED DESTRUCTION**

The United States adopted a "new" strategic doctrine in 1974 when the Secretary of Defense announced that "flexible strategic response" had displaced "assured destruction" as the rationale for nuclear strategy.<sup>1</sup> No longer would the United States propose to deter any Soviet nuclear attack by threatening to impose unacceptable damage on Soviet cities; now, deterrence of a Soviet attack was to be achieved by promising to respond with selective strikes commensurate to the provocations, avoiding Soviet cities as much as possible.

It was a significant change in American strategic policy, but not a radical departure. Dr. Schlesinger's announcement was preceded by repeated statements from President Nixon that the United States must have a "sufficient" strategic force and options other than surrendering abjectly or initiating a catastrophic nuclear war. It had many similarities to the "city avoidance" strategy adopted by the Kennedy Administration in 1962. It also followed, and developed with, the publication of an impressive body of literature in professional and scholarly journals which criticized and proposed alternatives to assured destruction as a guide for US strategic policy.

This paper examines a sample<sup>2</sup> of this literature as a means of exploring the meaning of some of the strategic principles which the

current doctrine encompasses and analyzing the arguments which the authors and Dr. Schlesinger have arrayed to justify a flexible strategic response doctrine. The implications of the new doctrine on strategic arms limitations, and the factors which appear to have facilitated the displacement of the assured destruction threat are also considered.

The articles selected for review are important in their own right. Designated by one of the contributors as the "second wave of strategic studies,"<sup>3</sup> as opposed to the first wave of the 1950's and 1960's out of which the mutual assured destruction doctrine evolved, these essays generally deal with the perennial issues of nuclear strategy. They raise questions of the highest significance for national and world security which almost surely will reoccur as technological and political developments require a reassessment of the opportunities and risks of existing strategic forces and doctrine. Moreover, since the authors are an influential group,<sup>4</sup> it can be safely assumed that their views are shared by a segment of the American community of strategists and defense intellectuals.

#### MAD AND FLEXIBLE STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Assured destruction retaliation, the victim of the onslaught of the authors of the second wave, and Schlesinger's flexible strategic response are shorthand phrases to denote strategic doctrines which presumably are designed to guide policymakers in determining force structure, declaratory policy, and all decisions related to strategic weapons policy. At the risk of oversimplification, they are briefly summarized in the following two paragraphs.

Assured destruction implies more than the commitment of the United States to have the capability to destroy one-fifth to one-fourth of the population and 50 percent of the industry<sup>5</sup> in the Soviet Union even after first absorbing a massive attack by the Soviet Union. The doctrine holds that to avoid nuclear war, the overriding value which strategy must serve, the Soviet Union should have the same capability and will. *Mutual* assured destruction (MAD) is prescribed. With both sides able to absorb a first strike and still destroy the adversary, and both sides knowing it, a nuclear attack cannot be rational; the aggressor would be committing national suicide. Therefore, neither superpower should endanger the other's deterrent by protecting its own hostage population or threatening the other's strategic forces. For either to do so would lead the other to become insecure (believing the opposition

might be planning a first strike), to increase its armaments and/or to contemplate a preemptive attack. Stable deterrence then would be destroyed. MAD advocates have praised the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty because it prevents the protection of hostage cities, and have opposed improving the accuracy of US missiles because this might be seen in Moscow as a threat to the survivability of Soviet missiles. MAD also has implications for strategic force structure. With active defense proscribed by treaty, only a finite number of delivery weapons and warheads are required for an assured destruction capability. MAD provides a standard for how much is enough.

Similarly, the current doctrine, as articulated by former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, encompasses more than the notion that the capability to respond to a Soviet attack with a variety of options against militarily significant targets is a more credible deterrent than the possession of an assured destruction capability aimed only at Soviet population and industry. It assumes that declaratory policy (as well as contingency plans) must recognize the possibility that deterrence may fail, and explicitly deal with the problems of fighting a nuclear war. It also assumes that strategic forces have a direct impact on crisis management, and even day-to-day diplomacy. The official US position includes the analytically distinct but, in fact, always related concept of "essential equivalence;"<sup>6</sup> the United States must maintain—and be perceived by foes, friends, and citizens as maintaining—strategic forces equal in effectiveness to those of the USSR. Schlesinger's doctrine thus mandates strategic forces logically different from those required by MAD: they must be equivalent to those of the USSR, and they must have the accuracy and flexibility to perform a variety of missions, while holding civilian casualties to a fraction of what they would be were cities directly attacked.

#### SECOND WAVE CHALLENGES TO MAD

Taken together, the articles being reviewed contain a comprehensive criticism of MAD as the basis of nuclear strategy. Four themes, appearing in most of them, are examined here. The questions of a deterrence only strategy, the credibility of an assured destruction threat, and the implications MAD has on the utility of strategic forces as an instrument of foreign policy are all addressed by Schlesinger's proposals. The issue of the morality of a policy which deliberately holds civilians hostage was not a part of the official justification of Schlesinger's doctrine.

*Inadequacy of a Deterrence Only Strategy.* The inadequacy of a deterrence only strategic doctrine—one that ignores the possibility that deterrence might fail or be irrelevant—is the principal issue considered by Fred Charles Iklé, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, in his 1973 article "Can Nuclear Deterrence Last Out the Century?" Other authors have made essentially the same points, but because Iklé's essay seems to have been so influential, it is worthy of extended treatment. It also extends Schlesinger's rationale, which contained little more than a statement that deterrence could fail. Iklé asserts that the advocates of MAD ignore the possibility of a war started by accident, miscalculation, "irrational" decisions, or escalation and implies that an accidental attack is the most probable scenario—certainly a disturbing possibility—to which the assured destruction doctrine's response could only be a nuclear holocaust. "Accident or miscalculation," he says,

is inherent not only in the ineradicable possibility of technical defects, but also in the inevitable vulnerability to human error of all command and operational procedures—during periods of high alert as well as during the many years of quiet waiting. So exceedingly complex are modern weapons systems, both in the internal mechanisms and in their intricate interactions, that it seems doubtful whether any group of experts could ever ferret out every unintended ramification, discover every lurking danger.<sup>7</sup>

Or consider officers on American and Russian missile-carrying submarines who

must be ready, presumably, to launch their enormously destructive loads even after military communications networks have been destroyed. Yet, they must never inadvertently or deliberately misconstrue an order to launch—during all those long years the submarines will cruise the oceans as part of the 'stable' deterrent, as well as during the confusion and turmoil of a global crisis. Will this formidable requirement always be present?<sup>8</sup>

Beyond that, MAD is only designed to deter a special type of intentional attack, and makes a "peculiar assumption about the 'rationality' of Soviet decisions we need to deter."

Our analysis [the orthodox position of American strategists in 1973, as Iklé understood it] implicitly argues that we have to prepare for a certain type of Soviet leader: a man who could be tempted to launch a surprise attack if the calculations we impute to them promise 'success;' who ignore the dangers of long term radioactive fallout (which our analysis omits) and

expect they could stay on top of the postwar chaos (about which our analysis says next to nothing). But we need not prepare—it is argued—for Soviet leaders who might be 'less rational' in an acute crisis and who might rely on their ability to launch an attack so designed as to deter us from retaliating . . .

When leaders of a powerful country are credited with a willingness to gamble on some scheme for nuclear surprise attack—a scheme whose calculations they cannot validate, whose assumptions they cannot test and whose failure would mean the end of their regime or even their country—how rational a decision are we assuming in our posture of deterrence?<sup>9</sup>

Martin J. Bailey accepts Iklé's arguments, but, if possible, is more pessimistic. At the outside, even if there are no unintentional attacks, he claims that deterrence will work no more than a century (history's record is 139 years, set by Roman-Byzantine and Persian emperors), not only for the reasons Iklé emphasized, but also because a decision to launch a nuclear war may not appear irrational to all leaders under all conditions. The damage threatened by the US assured destruction capability is considered unacceptable according to *our* values, and it assumes that population will be concentrated in cities. But population can be dispersed to the countryside rather easily, where cheap fallout shelters can assure the survival of virtually all of the population. A modest dispersion of industry could increase postwar recovery potential.

A Soviet leader seeking the ultimate triumph of communism could quietly prepare for a war . . . and could evacuate his cities on the pretext, say, of a deep crisis with China; then he could destroy the United States without warning, using chemical and biological weapons against the shocked and sick survivors of the nuclear attack. His prudent provision for recovery, and the use of his weapons against other countries, would assure Soviet dominance of the world even though US retaliation destroyed two-thirds of his industry.<sup>10</sup>

By *his* values, according to Bailey, that might be considered rational; he could not be deterred.

In these cases, nuclear war, probably limited at first, would be underway. Since MAD assumes that deterrence cannot fail, the doctrine has nothing to say about how a nuclear war might be fought. Many of the authors of the second wave even imply that the United States had no plans for fighting a nuclear war other than to launch a massive

retaliatory strike until MAD was laid to rest by Dr. Schlesinger. Schlesinger himself, however, has acknowledged that a variety of responses were in fact available.<sup>11</sup> The problem was, in part, that official public declarations conformed with the rhetoric of MAD rather than with the plans of the Department of Defense, and, in part, that all of the plans called for relatively massive responses.

*Credibility.* The most fundamental criticism levied against an assured destruction threat is that, from the time that the Soviet Union deployed its own second strike assured destruction capability, the threat has not been believable, except against a massive surprise attack against US cities, and therefore actually did not deter anything but the most improbable sort of attack. The doctrine that seeks only deterrence, in other words, does not deter the kinds of threats most likely to be made. In the 1950's or early 1960's, when the United States possessed incontestable strategic superiority, the threat of massive retaliation may have been credible because the result would have been to disarm the Soviet strategic force as well as destroy Soviet cities. But today, the argument runs, the Soviet Union could launch selective strikes against US military targets that would cause comparatively few civilian casualties, attack similar facilities of an ally, or both, and hold in reserve a full assured destruction capability. It is hard to believe that an American President would react to these kinds of attacks, which are held to be much more likely than an initial assault on cities, by ordering the death of a hundred million or so Russians, and very likely assure the death of an equal number of Americans. In the words of Robert H. Kupperman and his associates,

Potential conflicts that involve important but not supreme national interests may induce one side to initiate the limited use of nuclear weapons, and pure MAD, whose failure must result in mutual national suicide, offers no credible deterrent to such an action.<sup>12</sup>

The former Secretary of Defense has said that it is believable that the United States would launch such an attack in retaliation to a Soviet strike on cities in America or allied nations: the assured destruction threat is a credible deterrent against Soviet city-busting, even in NATO or Japan.<sup>13</sup> Obviously, as French strategists continuously emphasize, some allies are not as sure about the credibility of this deterrent as it applies to a threat against them as Dr. Schlesinger seems to be. Some of the articles under review express even greater doubt about the

credibility of a threat of massive retaliation given strategic parity. In effect, they hold it deters nothing. Why is a threat to indiscriminately kill Russians in retribution credible, Colin Gray asks, when to do so could serve no rational policy objective?<sup>14</sup> Albert Wohlstetter states the case very forcefully:

a threat to destroy oneself along with one's adversary in an orgy of mutual annihilation can dissuade only if the threatener is believably reckless about committing suicide.<sup>15</sup>

... a policy of unrestrained, indiscriminate attack on Russian civilians, executed without reserve, with no attempt to induce restraint in the Soviet leadership, can serve no purpose of state under any circumstances. If 'Mutual Assured Destruction'... means a policy of using strategic force only as a reflex to kill population, it calls for a course of action under every circumstance of attack that makes sense *in none*.<sup>16</sup>

The more theoretical questions related to deterrence receive relatively little explicit and systematic attention in these studies, although it would seem critical that they be resolved before a judgment can be made as to what kind of threat is or is not credible. The authors imply that the most important factor in a threat, if it is to effectively deter, is the perceived certainty that it will be carried out. As noted, they question deterrence based on massive retaliation only precisely because they think that the execution of the threat is not believable, at least in many possible circumstances. Promising a level of "unacceptable damage" of catastrophic proportions may actually have little restraining effect, and MAD errs in presuming that the magnitude of promised punishment is the most significant factor. Bailey, who does briefly explore the question, buttresses his position that certainty is more important than the magnitude of retaliation by citing studies by criminologists which suggest that "a high probability of detention and (mild) punishment deters crimes more effectively than a low probability of severe punishment."<sup>17</sup> Donald G. Brennan,<sup>18</sup> in arguing the case for defense, challenges the thesis that damage as severe as the destruction of one-fifth to one-fourth of the Soviet population ever must be threatened in order to deter Soviet leaders. Why not 10 percent, or less? (Schlesinger, by the way, has said that he thinks Brennan is right.<sup>19</sup>) Bruce Russett, whose "counter-combatant" alternative will be analyzed below, primarily bases his rationale on a belief that Soviet leaders would be more impressed by threats to their

political and military bases of support than by threats to lives or industry. And Michael M. May goes further: all governments (not just Communist ones), he writes, historically have been more often deterred by threats of defeat than by the threat of killing civilians. Russett also introduces the notion, possibly implied in some other discussions, that deterrence depends as much on the options presented to the adversary as on the nature of the threat. "Deterrence," he wrote, "results from making peace look better as well as from making war look worse."<sup>20</sup>

*MAD Restricts US Foreign Policy.* Some of the authors being reviewed attack MAD on the grounds that it has denied the United States the ability to use strategic forces as an instrument of foreign policy. Bailey, Kupperman *et al*, May, William R. Van Cleave and Robert W. Barrett, and especially Gray, assert that for great powers, strategic forces are the principal currency of international policies.<sup>21</sup> According to Gray,

The dynamic power inventories, or foreign influence potentials, of the [superpowers] are so complex in composition that statesmen and attentive publics the world over tend to appraise the rise and fall of their fortunes by means of prominent if unsophisticated indicators. The leading such indicator is the state of the strategic balance, because this is thought to be an important index of a nation's will to power or influence. It is unlikely that the condition of the balance could seriously misrepresent a more complex reality.<sup>22</sup>

A fundamental assumption which seems to underlie Gray's belief in the political utility of strategic forces is that international politics is a game whose rules do not change: strategic power once counted, therefore it still counts. More importantly, he is certain that the Soviet leadership believes in the political efficacy of nuclear weapons, and in a future crisis will act on their belief. With the superiority which Gray is sure they will achieve unless the United States changes its posture, instead of bowing to American demands as in the Cuban Crisis, the Soviets will expect the United States to back down.

Schlesinger, who insisted in his official statements that US strategic forces must be perceived as at least equal to those of the Soviet Union, seems to concur with Gray's assessment of the diplomatic significance of strategic forces. He contends that to allow the Soviet forces to be viewed as superior to those of the United States would cause US determination to be questioned. The perceptions of potential enemies were apparently most significant to Schlesinger:

... we cannot exclude the possibility that future Soviet leaders might be misled into believing that such apparently favorable asymmetries could, at the very least, be exploited for diplomatic advantage. Pressure, confrontation, and crisis could easily follow from a miscalculation of this nature. It is well and good to assert that the Soviet leaders, faced by an adamant and unified America, would come to their senses in time to avoid fatal mistakes in such a situation and would recognize the illusory nature of their advantages. But a crisis might already be too late for such an awakening.<sup>23</sup>

The fault of the assured destruction doctrine, the argument holds, was that it justified restrictions on the size of US strategic forces, endorsing the capability to place millions of Russians in jeopardy, but denounced a force and declaratory policy which could have really significant diplomatic impact. Although political influence is obtained through counterforce<sup>24</sup> capable missiles with large throw weights such as the Soviets have deployed (the "unsophisticated" indicators which impress observers), MAD advocates, accepting a "business administration logic,"<sup>25</sup> emphasized smaller weapons designed for soft targets.

While none of these writers would argue that MAD facilitates the use of strategic forces as an instrument of foreign policy, some, by their failure to discuss the issue and by their preoccupation with deterrence, imply either that strategic forces have no utility in international politics, or that they ought not to be used to support diplomatic maneuvering. A middle ground was taken by Donald R. Westervelt, who held that strategic forces are of little value diplomatically if both superpowers pursue sensible strategies:

... in a real sense ICBM forces *have* only a restricted political utility in that they cannot be visibly, even ostentatiously, alerted (brandished) in time of crisis as can other forces. Furthermore, they cannot be credibly used to back up ultimatums, if mutual deterrence *at every level of execution* is maintained. Their only use, then, is to maintain that deterrence or as a reply in the last resort to nothing less than a nuclear attack, in like-for-like retaliation or a reply scaled to discourage further hostilities and/or to limit further damage.<sup>26</sup>

*Morality of Citizen Hostages.* Most of the writers make passing comments about the immorality of a strategy which deliberately targets civilians—innocent civilians who can have little if any influence on their government's decisions—and deliberately avoids military installations.

"Not even Genghis Khan," Albert Wohlstetter claims, "tried to avoid military targets and concentrate *only* on killing civilians."<sup>27</sup> Iklé's article conveys a sense of real moral indignation. Only two authors, however, attempt to systematically analyze the moral and ethical questions of nuclear strategy. Arthur Lee Burns and Bruce M. Russet,<sup>28</sup> in independent but extremely similar studies, attempt to apply to nuclear strategy the standards of the just conduct of war evolved in the Western State system, and more or less recognized until the advent of strategic bombing in World War II. The former Secretary of Defense and other official spokesmen have not based their rejection of MAD on moral grounds, although President Nixon did say that posing an assured destruction threat was in conflict with American values.<sup>29</sup> But the critique on ethical principles is fundamental, and by reviewing the arguments it will be possible to evaluate flexible strategic response also against this one set of moral criteria.

Rejecting pacifism and simplistic "ends justifies the means" reasoning, Burns and Russet do not see any easy choices for the statesman deciding questions of strategy. If there is any clear imperative, it is that the first obligation of strategy is to prevent nuclear war. If that end can only be achieved by holding hundreds of millions of lives as hostages, it is a repugnant but necessary plan. But if a nuclear attack may be deterred some other way, then the Judeo-Christian tradition and simple humanity require that the distinction between combatants and noncombatants be honored: morally, one may threaten the former in behalf of a just cause, but not the latter. Like all of the second wave, moreover, they believe that a Soviet nuclear attack can be deterred without targeting Soviet cities.

Neither Burns nor Russet claim that a targeting policy which avoids cities will thereby avoid the horrors of nuclear war; millions would die in any nuclear exchange. They do believe that a city-avoidance strategy would result in fewer deaths than an assured destruction response, but that does not make one morally superior to the other. Alternative strategies are less immoral than those based on countercity targeting if they do not deliberately aim at killing civilians. As Russet puts it, the deaths of noncombatants would not be willed—only tolerated. Morally, the distinction between intentionally threatening combatants and noncombatants is the most important consideration.

Russet raises other standards which are required for a morally acceptable strategy. For example, a retaliatory response must be in proportion to the initial offense, and no act of violence may be greater

than is required to achieve a legitimate objective. There must be hope of success that the action to be taken will avert a greater evil: revenge is not a morally acceptable motive. A threat against the population of all major Soviet cities, as incorporated in MAD, would rarely (if ever) measure up.

Obviously, Schlesinger's formula is less vulnerable to the criticisms of Burns and Russet than MAD. While the former Secretary of Defense based his case on credibility, the probability of saving American lives, and the need for readiness should deterrence fail—reasons which largely ignore the moral criteria—the doctrine does recognize the combatant-noncombatant dichotomy, and focuses its primary threat against combatants and military facilities. It accepts the notion of proportionality, and at least implies the use of minimum necessary force. Schlesinger's doctrine does not exclude pure revenge, but it is explicitly formulated to provide the United States with the ability to take action related to meaningful political objectives. As will become more clear when Russet's "countercombatant" strategy is contrasted with flexible strategic response, Schlesinger's doctrine does fall short of satisfying these ethical standards: it does not make the reduction of collateral damage the sole or even primary objective in designing US strategic forces, and by advocating an assured destruction reserve and threatening to destroy Soviet cities in retaliation to a Soviet countercity attack, it does not completely withdraw the threat to civilians.

According to Michael M. May, countercity targeting will eventually be rejected by an aroused American people (what may arouse us, he doesn't indicate) precisely because it is immoral. Nixon and Schlesinger imply a similar idea. Nixon's comment was not necessarily that public opinion will prohibit the levying of an assured destruction threat, but that leaders ought not to establish policies which contravene society's values. Schlesinger, referring to the moral dilemma decisionmakers would face if they had to react to a limited Soviet nuclear attack with only an assured destruction capability,<sup>30</sup> suggests the same idea. Russet, on the other hand, fears that strategy has and will impact on American moral standards, rather than the reverse.

... there is something brutal about the readiness with which most of us have accepted a countercity retaliatory posture up to now. It would be still more brutalizing to fight, and even to win, such a war. We cannot completely forget to ask what kind of people we could be in the end.<sup>31</sup>

The response of the Soviet Union is really irrelevant to this kind of

argument. US strategy is judged on its own merits, and Soviet immorality does not justify American immorality. Russet, who tries to present his alternative to MAD so that it will appeal to the most amoral geopolitician as well as to observers sensitive to ethical matters, does suggest that the Soviets would have every incentive to release the populations of US cities from hostage if his suggested alternative were adopted. Others, particularly Conrad V. Chester and Eugene P. Wigner and Brennan,<sup>32</sup> are concerned about what the Soviets may do. They view the deliberate denial of a defensive capability which would save *American* lives—they are not concerned primarily about Russians—as the most immoral feature of MAD doctrine. The first obligation of government is held to be the protection of its citizens, a trust that has been violated due to fascination with the dogma of stable deterrence. A nuclear holocaust that destroys civilization, according to Chester and Wigner, will only take place “with the cooperation of the victims,”<sup>33</sup> or, more exactly, the leaders of the victims. Soviet leaders have a better record than American, even though they too have given up active defense. They do have presumably effective civil defense programs which, if war comes, will save millions of lives, even though such action, according to MAD theorists, is supposed to be destabilizing. And besides the question of morality, Soviet attention to defense while the United States ignores it could provide the Soviets with a crucial advantage should war occur, a consideration which appears to be at least as important to these writers as the moral questions.

#### PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES TO MAD

Reliance on assured destruction retaliation is condemned. What should replace it? Except for those who would emphasize defense, these authors recommend some variant of what former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger proclaimed: a doctrine of flexible strategic response. Insofar as any disagree with Schlesinger's formula, it is over the wisdom of a visible counterforce capability, whether others' perceptions of the relative strengths of US and Soviet strategic forces need be considered, and, for Russet and perhaps Burns and Iklé, whether a warfighting capability or assured destruction reserve have a place in US strategic doctrine.

*Selective Options.* The urgent requirements of US strategic doctrine for these authors are implied in their criticism of MAD. Instead of what they contend is the unwise, suicidal, immoral, and/or incredible threat

of assured destruction, most of them support a threat of selective responses appropriate to the most probable provocations, limited or massive. The doctrine should propose, in colloquial terms, a punishment to fit the crime. Next, the doctrine should provide for the possibility that deterrence might fail or be irrelevant and include the plans and capabilities to fight a nuclear war in such a way that US casualties will be kept at a minimum, uncontrolled escalation discouraged, and early termination facilitated. The possession of this capability, and the Soviet perception that the United States will use it, will dissuade the Soviets from the serious miscalculation of testing American resolve by applying nuclear pressure or attempting nuclear blackmail against the United States or its allies. This, of course, is exactly what Dr. Schlesinger announced as official US policy.

It has been noted that the strategic forces required for flexible strategic response and for fighting a controlled nuclear war differ from those implied in the assured destruction only formula. Assured destruction means hitting relatively easy targets (cities are large and soft) and that does not necessarily require a large number of highly accurate delivery vehicles. If, on the other hand, collateral damage is to be avoided so as not to incite Soviet attacks on American civilians as small, military installations are destroyed, a large number of highly accurate delivery vehicles is necessary. And if Soviet hardened missile launchers are to be placed on the target list, the warheads will probably need to have a relatively high yield, since hard kill capability is a function of both accuracy and throw weight. Schlesinger and the authors who think an enhanced counterforce capability is desirable do advocate the development of warheads with greater yields, both to strengthen the US counterforce capability should selected responses be required and to enhance the appearance of a counterforce capability to reinforce deterrence.

*Alleged Destabilizing Implications.* Critics<sup>34</sup> of the second wave and Schlesinger argue that the premise that the Soviets can be induced to omit American cities from their target lists if the United States takes care to avoid Soviet cities is simply false. Instead, an exchange of selective strikes would result in millions of deaths from direct blast effect and incalculable casualties from fall-out. In such circumstances, they say, escalation to countercity exchanges would be inevitable. Once the nuclear threshold is crossed, holocaust cannot be prevented. Flexible strategic response would really not serve a constructive purpose of saving lives.

On the other hand, the critics contend, Schlesinger's doctrine approves the development of US strategic forces which would be provocative and, therefore, destabilizing. In part this is said to be so because flexible strategic response, unlike MAD, includes no rationale for limiting the size, destructiveness, and cost of a nuclear arsenal. Large US outlays will stimulate greater Soviet expenditures, which will then be used to justify even larger US budgets and thus produce a spiraling arms race. It has been widely reported that a major reason why McNamara's "city avoidance" strategy announced in 1962 was so quickly reversed was to stem the flow of weapons requests which it engendered.<sup>35</sup> McNamara and Kennedy wanted to curb defense expenditures, and the assured destruction declaratory policy provided a rationale for saying no to the armed forces and the many congressional allies that they had at that time. The present administration, confronted with a Congress less sympathetic to the Defense Department, a stronger Soviet strategic threat than the Kennedy Administration faced, and concerned about influencing strategic arms limitation negotiations with the USSR, desires a doctrine which will induce Congress to say yes to requests for larger appropriations. Schlesinger would not agree that the adoption and implementation of his doctrine will lead to an intensified arms race, and most of the writers of the second wave reject the action-reaction model of the arms race.<sup>36</sup> All of them would agree, however, that flexible strategic response is a better vehicle for justifying strategic force expenditures than MAD. All but a few of them, unlike the critics, would applaud Schlesinger's proposals for that reason.

Critics are also concerned about the quality of the strategic force which Schlesinger's doctrine requires. Improved accuracy for US delivery vehicles is viewed as particularly provocative and dangerous. The pre-1974 force, they contend, already posed what the Soviets must have seen as a serious threat to their intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM's), with a more than adequate number of sufficiently accurate reentry vehicles to provide desirable flexibility. Greater accuracy would increase the US ability to execute precision strikes (an ability the critics do not believe to be necessary in the first place), but it could also have, to the Soviets, the appearance of an attempt to develop a first strike capability, especially when perceived in conjunction with a declaratory policy that emphasizes the warfighting utility of the US strategic force. The Soviets would react by enlarging and improving their own force. In a crisis the perceived American counterforce threat would encourage the USSR to strike first in the hope of crippling the US capability.

In "The Essence of Armed Futility," Westervelt has given extensive attention to the question of attaining a first strike capability, or at least the technical matters that underlie it. Using public information, he rather conclusively demonstrates that neither side can have confidence in the success of a disarming first strike or first strike that results in a meaningful advantage to the aggressor, even if one considers only ICBM's. Schlesinger emphatically agreed with this position.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, since, in fact, the United States could not achieve a disarming first strike, Soviet leaders who have access to the same information have no reason to fear one. If, against Westervelt's reasoned argument, they nonetheless did mistakenly perceive the US force as a first strike threat, they still would not launch a preemptive strike because they would know that it could not succeed. Van Cleave and Barnett maintain that the only possible Soviet reaction would be to reduce the vulnerability of their own force (they are already doing everything else), and that would not be bad. With Bailey and Gray, Van Cleave and Barnett think it is proper to change to a posture with warfighting potential, even if to do so weakens deterrence because it is perceived as threatening by the Soviet Union. They consider the ability to strike selected military targets and the means to limit the damage to the United States as more important than a deterrent that cannot be totally reliable.

*Flexible Strategic Response and Likelihood of War.* The flexible response doctrine itself, as opposed to force changes based upon it, is challenged by latter day MAD advocates because they say it acts to make nuclear war seem less terrible, less unthinkable, and therefore more likely. The availability of plans to use nuclear weapons for every conceivable contingency will, in some future crisis, encourage decisionmakers to resort to force instead of the uncertain processes of diplomacy, when mutual accommodations and compromise might, in fact, offer a promising solution. Schlesinger did nothing to quiet such concerns when he told a member of the House Armed Services Committee that the belief that his doctrine tends to increase the chances of nuclear war "is a fair, logical inference."<sup>38</sup> Nor do analyses like "The Deterrence Continuum," by Kupperman and associates, with its implication that new technological gadgets allow weapons of mass destruction to be manipulated with the ease that a maestro controls an orchestra of professional musicians, or Chester and Wigner's "Population Vulnerability," all but equating the dangers of radiation with those of nicotine, remove their fears.<sup>39</sup> Most writers of the second

wave, and Schlesinger in later, more cautious pronouncements, deny this charge. The plans and capability to execute them, it is argued, will not make nuclear war seem frivolous or so low in cost that decisionmakers—most definitely American decisionmakers—will be tempted to resort to the use of strategic nuclear weapons if any other option is available. Almost all of the discussions, it should be noted, center on responses to Soviet nuclear provocation, although Schlesinger did not rule out the possibility of the United States initiating a strategic nuclear strike. Only Dr. Gray emphasizes first use options for US doctrine.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, they emphasize that even the most restricted nuclear exchange would be too costly to rationally contemplate.

*Differences Among the Second Wave.* The desirability of counterforce capabilities, in force structure or doctrine, is a point of dispute among the writers being considered. The issue centers on a question of degree, and the way the counterforce options are made matters of declaratory policy. All argue that greater accuracy, which automatically provides an enhanced counterforce capability, is necessary or at least highly desirable, for the greater the accuracy, the greater the range of possible selective options without heavy casualties to civilians. Russet, Burns, and perhaps Iklé, apparently would prefer to abstain from counterforce threats and targeting altogether and would not further improve US hard target kill potential by developing warheads with greater throw weights. It is the authors who stress the utility of strategic forces as an instrument of foreign policy and the importance of perceptions of the strategic balance, who believe that the United States should deploy warheads with greater throw weights. Apparently their principal concern is that if the United States does not maintain a powerful counterforce capability, the Soviets will attain the appearance of strategic superiority. This situation is considered far more ominous than the possible dangers of the United States appearing provocative.

The official Defense Department rationale of its proposals falls somewhere in between the arguments that deemphasize counterforce and those that give it first priority. Schlesinger argued for an improved hard target kill capability and proposed that warheads with the higher yields be developed. But he did not seek the larger explosives as a matter of urgency, and he stated that the United States would prefer that both sides not develop greater counterforce capabilities. Rather than a call for action by Congress, Schlesinger's statement seemed to be a warning to the USSR that if it did not show restraint, the United States was

prepared to respond. Schlesinger also may have intended to tell the Soviet leadership that its failure to accept a reasonable strategic arms limitation agreement in the current negotiations would have dangerous consequences.

The proposal in this set of articles which most diverges from the doctrine presented by Schlesinger was formulated by Bruce Russet who, with Burns, based his criticism of MAD on moral grounds. Russet does advocate flexible strategic response, but he rejects the need for—certainly the need to talk about—a warfighting capability or an assured destruction reserve. The targeting plans which Russet recommends include few Soviet ICBM's because an effective counterforce capability might be provocative. Russet suggests that Soviet missiles currently targeted might remain as options but he implies that he would allow some counterforce plans only as a concession to gain the support of others for his overall scheme.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, he believes that an assured destruction reserve to deter attacks on US cities would be acceptable, but his preference is to totally reject the morally offensive idea of holding Soviet citizens as hostages. Russet's threat would be to the Soviet Union's ability to use its conventional military forces to quell internal disorder or protect its borders from Eastern European or, especially, Chinese incursions. He has in mind relatively soft targets not collocated with population centers such as troop concentrations, airfields, and transportation facilities. If the strategic forces developed to implement his plan, which would emphasize accuracy and low yield, "clean" warheads, also had warfighting and damage-limiting potential, that would be a fortuitous but unintended development. Declaratory policy devolving from the countercombatant strategy would, like the MAD doctrine he criticized, only deal with deterrence: deterrence without a direct, intentional threat to civilians.

*Defensive Options.* Many of the authors of the second wave would welcome a place for active defense in US doctrine, in spite of the ABM Treaty and subsequent agreement which limits the United States to one ABM site. Because of these limitations, defense cannot occupy a prominent place in US strategic doctrine for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, the proposals for giving a prominent position to defense are included in this discussion because the ABM Treaty may not be a permanent part of the strategic environment.

A comprehensive defense of defense in the sample of articles is an essay by Donald Brennan written in 1969 as a contribution to the

Safeguard debate, when the options for ballistic missile defense had not been closed. Brennan argued that ballistic missile defenses can save lives and property (make the difference between total calamity and a functioning society), complicate Soviet targeting problems, and provide an additional firebreak to the use of nuclear weapons. To the charge that ABM's are unreasonably expensive and could be overcome by less expensive offensive weapons, Brennan arrays an impressive argument to the contrary—a position, however, that few of his colleagues appear to accept. Nor would ABM's be destabilizing, he contended, if the United States exercised restraint. Brennan is one of those who rejects the action-reaction model of an arms race as simplistic, if not wrong, and contends that the Soviets would not necessarily add to their offensive force in an effort to offset US defense, as it would be unnecessary for the United States to similarly respond to Soviet defenses. Armament decisions are based on more factors than merely the size of an adversary's force. Bailey reinforces the position that a defense-oriented strategy would provide stability. Force vulnerability, which makes it possible for one side to gain an advantage by striking first, he states, is destabilizing; by reducing vulnerability with ballistic missile defenses, stability would be strengthened. One of Bailey's specific suggestions illustrates a nonprovocative strategic posture incorporating ABM's particularly well. The United States would deploy active defenses, together with a civil defense program, that would reduce the potential fatalities of a Soviet attack by one-half (and protect our ICBM's) at a cost of \$5 billion to \$10 billion. At the same time, offensive forces would be cut by one-half. The preexisting balance would be maintained, but with fewer lives on both sides held as hostages. If the USSR agreed to do the same thing, the half would be halved again.

Civil defense is compatible with proposals of these strategists, and the absence of a meaningful US program now is thought, at least by some, to provide a distinct advantage to the Soviet Union, which apparently considers civil defense as important as rocket forces.<sup>42</sup> An effective civil defense program would demonstrate the national will, and strengthen deterrence by giving the United States the capability "to respond in kind if the Soviet Union attempts to intimidate us in a time of crisis by evacuating the population from its cities."<sup>43</sup> More important, in the event of war, effective civil defense would save lives. Chester and Wigner argue that with adequate evacuation plans and shelters perhaps only five percent of the casualties possible from blast effect without civil defense would occur. Instead of the typical

reference to half of industry being destroyed, they note that half which would survive would have an output equal to the GNP of 1951 in constant dollars—hardly the end of the United States as a functioning society. People would continue to die from fallout, but outside of the primary blast areas the numbers would only be slightly more than one percent of those now killed annually from cigarette-induced cancer! And civil defense would not be provocative.

We argue that reducing the vulnerability of the US population to that of the Soviet Union should not increase the likelihood of nuclear war. One would expect that the prospects of the political and economic cost of an evacuation alone without war, to be a sufficient deterrent for most national leaders. A risk of actual nuclear strikes against even the evacuated major cities of a nation would be acceptable only because of the gravest of issues.<sup>44</sup>

The civil defense programs which Schlesinger proposed for FY 1975 and FY 1976 were less impressive than the relatively comprehensive plans of the Soviet Union. The attention to relocation, shelters, and planning does suggest, however, that it is receiving a higher priority than in previous years, and the arguments Schlesinger cited imply some sympathy for the positions of the strategists of defense.

#### FLEXIBLE STRATEGIC RESPONSE AND SALT

The authors being considered all expressly support the concept of strategic arms limitations, and they all conclude that their alternatives (in the cases of articles written in 1974, Schlesinger's alternative) are as compatible with arms control as mutual assured destruction. They all at least imply, however, that the commendable objective of reducing the strategic arsenals of the superpowers is not as important as developing and implementing good strategy. As Gray puts it:

Doctrine should not be adjusted to accommodate that which is negotiable; rather, that which is negotiable should first be determined in domestic and interallied discussions over what is strategically desirable.<sup>45</sup>

Agreements for their own sake are small change in comparison with the development of a strategic posture that reduces the risks of—and in—a nuclear holocaust.<sup>46</sup>

These strategists are less than enthusiastic about the principal strategic arms limits so far agreed to. Several of them, most vehemently

Bailey, Brennan, Gray, Van Cleave, and Barnett, in fact, view the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) agreements as a major national disaster, and hold that they are direct results of the mutual assured destruction doctrine and justifiable only in terms of MAD logic. Supporters of the agreements did often defend the such terms: the restrictions of the ABM Treaty preserve stable deterrence, it was said, by assuring the vulnerability of the citizens of each nation to the strategic forces of the other; and the greater numbers of launchers allowed the Soviet Union by the Interim Agreement were judged to be acceptable, although unnecessarily high, as long as the United States retained an assured destruction capability. The Vladivostok accords, with the provisions that authorize both sides the same number of launchers and multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles, are more acceptable to the second wave observers. The ABM Treaty, however, still seems to be viewed as a dangerous expression of a dangerous strategic doctrine, preserving the hostage cities arrangement they deplore.

While the ABM Treaty is compatible with MAD, the argument that it is incompatible with a doctrine of flexible strategic response, and therefore must be changed to conform with current doctrine, is less than convincing. The treaty not only prevents the superpowers from effectively defending their cities, assuring the vulnerability of the targets for assured destruction attacks, but it also restricts their capability to protect militarily significant targets away from cities (including ICBM's), thereby assuring the vulnerability of the targets for flexible strategic response as well. Schlesinger's doctrine even provides a rationale for the principle—not the unequal ceilings—of the Interim Agreement. By freezing the number of launchers, it fixed the number of missiles each side will probably consider as potential targets. It can be argued that Schlesinger's proposals would not have been feasible except for the restrictions of SALT. The requirements to overcome ABM defenses and accommodate a significantly larger number of targets might have increased the costs of a flexible strategic response capability beyond the limits Congress would accept. Thus, analyzed in the framework of flexible strategic response, the SALT agreements contribute to a stable deterrence relationship, or as Westervelt more cautiously put it, "not an unstable situation,"<sup>47</sup> just as in the framework of MAD. The targets of each side are kept vulnerable to the deterrent force of the other, and their numbers are limited somewhat in proportion to the capabilities of the other. The logic is the same—only the nature of the target is different.

This is not to suggest that flexible strategic response would be compatible with any arms limitation agreement, or as wide a range of possible types of agreements as would MAD. Logically, relatively smaller forces would be acceptable under a mutual assured destruction regime than under flexible strategic response. And while MAD can be used to justify qualitative restrictions, such as a comprehensive ban on testing, flexible strategic response seems to counsel that few barriers to technological innovation should be accepted. Those who believe that reducing the size of arsenals would, in and of itself, contribute to world peace are likely to find Schlesinger's doctrine less palatable than MAD.

#### INCONCLUSIVE QUALITY AND CHANGING SETTING OF STRATEGIC DEBATE

Schlesinger's doctrine has been reaffirmed as official administration policy and at least obliquely endorsed by Congress. There is less than a consensus behind it, however, and a continuing debate among intellectuals, members of Congress, and the administration is predictable. The questions raised by the essays of the second wave and Schlesinger's proposals, then, have not been finally resolved. Perhaps the only definite result from these discussions is that a deterrent posture based on a threat of assured destruction only is no longer possible, if it ever was. After repeated assertions by a President, a Secretary of Defense, and numerous other official and unofficial authorities that an assured destruction threat is at most credible only as a response to Soviet countercity attacks, it must be concluded that, in fact, the threat is not now credible against more limited strikes and thus will not deter them.

The ideas expressed by Secretary Schlesinger and the strategists being reviewed are as old as the debates on nuclear war, despite the fact that flexible strategic response was advertised as a new doctrine when proposed. Yet, for a fairly extended period of time, official declaratory policy and the majority of academic strategists rejected them, and instead embraced the theory which now regularly is identified, even by friends, with the unflattering acronym of MAD. The causes of the ascendancy of flexible strategic response are no doubt complex, involving questions of bureaucratic politics, budgeting, perceptions of the Soviet regime, and ethical standards, as well as nuclear strategy. But it seems clear that two developments largely account for the present popularity of Schlesinger's doctrine. The first consists of the dramatic

expansion of Soviet strategic forces, and the second is the continuous, steady advancement in technology.

The contours of MAD were formulated against the background of US strategic superiority without knowledge of the type of strategic doctrine that the Soviets would ultimately adopt. Perhaps the mutual assured destruction strategists hoped that Soviet leaders would imitate the United States, and accept mutual assured destruction as the basis of their policy. Critics of MAD typically accuse the earlier strategists of naively believing that they could educate the Russians. At any rate, the writers of the second wave and the former Secretary of Defense and his associates have been confronted with Soviet forces which are on a par with—some say better than—US forces. Moreover, Soviet strategists apparently have proved ineducatable as far as the doctrine of mutual assured destruction is concerned. Although the Soviet Union has imposed the threat of annihilating American cities and declined to state a desire to spare civilians, they have never foresworn counterforce options, and have deployed a strategic force with impressive counterforce capabilities.

When the early works on nuclear strategy were written, the weapons deployed were relatively simple and crude compared to the sophisticated devices available and on drawing boards today. It was possible then to avoid cities and aim at military targets, but without much confidence that civilian casualties could be kept at a really low level or that fallout effects would be tolerable. Large cities could be destroyed without much precision. The strategists whose works are considered in this review, on the other hand, have known that the technology to successfully kill relatively smaller targets with relatively smaller collateral damage is already in the US strategic inventory, and that greater improvements in accuracy and reduced fallout are feasible. While there is wide disagreement about the actual and potential reliability and precision of delivery vehicles and command and control apparatus, there is no doubt that a wider range of options are technically possible now than in the 1950's and 1960's when the first wave of strategic studies emerged.

The fact that environmental changes have stimulated relatively broad acceptance of the doctrine of flexible strategic response suggests that these issues of strategy may have to be periodically—or continuously—redebated, for present conditions will not be constant. Technological developments steadily alter the quality of strategic forces, opening new options and possibly closing others. The

deployment of cruise missiles, with their pinpoint accuracy and ability to avoid detection, for example, may represent the kind of technological change which demands a transformation of doctrine.<sup>48</sup> The evolution of effective antisubmarine warfare techniques, possibly making submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM's) as vulnerable as ICBM's, would undermine present assumptions about the feasibility of a disarming first strike and the doctrinal propositions based on them. New technologies of defense could provide the grounds for both superpowers to reformulate their strategies and reconstruct their forces.

Neither are the sources of nuclear threats to the United States likely to remain unchanged. The second wave and Schlesinger's defense of flexible strategic response contain very little analysis of the probable consequences of the People's Republic of China's emergence as a full strategic competitor with the United States and the Soviet Union, and almost nothing about the possible problems of deterrence in a world of many nations, and possibly terrorist groups, with varying capabilities to use nuclear weapons. It is possible that the basic assumptions of flexible strategic response will be unaffected by future changes, or perhaps even that MAD will again appear to be an eminently sane alternative; certainly reappraisals will be in order.

Even in the unlikely event that the political and technological environment of US and Soviet strategic forces were to be relatively stable, the inconclusive quality of the debates on strategic doctrine would remain. Many of the questions involved cannot be answered authoritatively, in the sense of validating propositions with scientific data. What deters the leadership of the Soviet Union? What moral standards should guide US strategic policy? What level of security risk is permissible so that funds can be diverted to other uses? There are also the less nebulous but still elusive technical questions about present and future capabilities of weapons systems and the potential reliability of command and control procedures. These data may only become completely known after the war that all strategists hope to prevent.

#### SUMMARY

Most of the contributors to the second wave of strategic studies broadly support current US strategic doctrine, and all of them approve of flexible strategic response more than mutual assured destruction. Even the critics of the critics of MAD, who are also opponents of Schlesinger's doctrine, agree that selective responses must be available,

and correctly note that many retaliatory options were in fact available during the reign of mutual assured destruction, its rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding. Their disagreements center on how much flexibility is required, the capabilities which the US strategic force should possess, and especially the way in which the options should be discussed. Contemporary supporters of MAD seem most concerned that the doctrine of flexible strategic response gives official sanction and respectability to thinking about what they would keep unthinkable: fighting a nuclear war. Those among second wave writers with the most significant differences with the majority of their colleagues and the former Secretary of Defense either advocate a strategy with a preeminent emphasis on defense, or, like latter day advocates of MAD, are concerned that too much emphasis on counterforce in structuring US strategic forces and warfighting capabilities in declaratory policy could be perceived by the Soviets as provocative, or is immoral. Strategic arms limitations are deemed compatible with—they may be necessary to implement—a flexible strategic response doctrine. Although flexible strategic response is official US policy, it is still opposed by influential officials, especially in Congress, so that the debate is likely to continue. Strategic doctrine is sensitive to changes in its environment, and adjustments are probable as political and technological constraints are altered. Issues of strategy, in any case, involve such nebulous matters that conclusive, final decisions are unlikely.

## ENDNOTES

1. Secretary Schlesinger announced the new doctrine in a speech to the Overseas Writers Association in Washington on January 10, 1974. A comprehensive statement and defense of the proposals is contained in James R. Schlesinger, *Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1975*, pp. 3-6 and 25-44, which is used throughout the paper as the principal source for Schlesinger's position.

2. Martin J. Bailey, "Deterrence, Assured Destruction, and Defense," *Orbis*, Fall 1972, pp. 682-695; Donald G. Brennan, "The Case for Missile Defense," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1969, pp. 433-448; and "Some Fundamental Problems of Arms Control and National Security," *Orbis*, Spring 1971, pp. 218-231; Arthur Lee Burns, "Ethics and Deterrence: A Nuclear Balance Without Hostage Cities?," *Adelphi Papers No. 69*, July 1970; Conrad V. Chester and Eugene P. Wigner, "Population Vulnerability: The Neglected Issue in Arms Limitation and the Strategic Balance," *Orbis*, Fall 1974, pp. 763-769; Colin S. Gray, "Foreign Policy and the Strategic Balance," *Orbis*, Fall 1974, pp. 706-727; "Rethinking Nuclear Strategy," *Orbis*, Winter 1974, pp. 1145-1160; "The 'Second Wave': New Directions in Strategic Studies," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, December 1973, pp. 35-41, and "Unsafe At Any Speed: A Critique of 'Stable Deterrence' Doctrine," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, June 1973, pp. 23-27; Fred Charles Ikle, "Can Nuclear Deterrence Last Out the Century?," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1973, pp. 267-285; Robert H. Kupperman, Robert M. Behr and Thomas P. Jones, Jr., "The Deterrence Continuum," *Orbis*, Fall 1974, pp. 728-749; Michael M. May, "Some Advantages of a Counterforce Deterrence," *Orbis*, Summer 1974, pp. 271-283; Bruce M. Russett, "Counter-Combatant Deterrence: A Proposal," *Survival*, January 1974, pp. 135-140, and *Power and Community in World Politics*, Chapter 14: "A Countercombatant Deterrent? Feasibility, Morality, and Arms Control," pp. 234-252; William R. Van Cleave and Roger W. Barnett, "Strategic Adaptability," *Orbis*, Fall 1974, pp. 655-676; Donald R. Westervelt, "The Essence of Armed Futility," *Orbis*, Fall 1974, pp. 689-705; and Albert Wohlstetter, "Threats and Promises of Peace: Europe and America in the New Era," *Orbis*, Winter 1974, pp. 1107-1145. These articles will not be cited in subsequent notes when the text indicates the source of a position, except when there are direct quotations.

3. Gray, "The 'Second Wave': New Directions in Strategic Studies."

4. Fred Charles Ikle is Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). As of 1974, Robert M. Behr was an assistant director, and Robert H. Kupperman a deputy assistant director, of ACDA. Thomas P. Jones, Jr., and Roger W. Barnett were, at the time they wrote the articles being reviewed, Lieutenant Commanders in the US Navy. Both were assigned to the SALT I delegation, and Jones was also with ACDA. William R. Van Cleave has been a consultant to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Many of the others are recognized academic authorities.

5. This is the frequently used standard of "unacceptable damage" which must be threatened in order to deter a Soviet attack under the assured destruction formula. See Robert McNamara, *Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1969*, p. 50.

6. Schlesinger, pp. 41-42, stresses the separability of the two concepts, and emphasizes that the retargeting proposals, which were not to require large additional appropriations, could be adopted without accepting the need for essential equivalence, to which a fairly large price tag was attached. In the overall argument, however, the two notions were closely intertwined.

7. Iklé, p. 272.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.
10. Bailey, p. 686.
11. Schlesinger, p. 4.
12. Kupperman, *et al.*, p. 731.
13. Schlesinger, p. 37.
14. Gray, "Unsafe At Any Speed: A Critique of 'Stable Deterrence' Doctrine," p. 26.
15. Wohlstetter, p. 1128.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 1133. Emphasis added.
17. Bailey, p. 685.
18. Except where otherwise indicated. Brennan's position is taken from "The Case for Missile Defense."
19. Schlesinger, *Arms Interaction and Arms Control*, pp. 10-11, cited in Desmond J. Ball, "Deja Vu: The Return to Counterforce in the Nixon Administration; (or, The Politics of Potential Nuclear Castration)," in Robert O'Neill, ed., *The Strategic Nuclear Balance: An Australian Perspective*, p. 202.
20. Russet, pp. 241-242.
21. See also John M. Collins, "Maneuver Instead of Mass: The Key to Assured Stability," *Orbis*, Fall 1974, pp. 750-762, and Paul H. Nitze, "The Strategic Balance Between Hope and Skepticism," *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1974-75, pp. 136-156.
22. Gray, "Foreign Policy and the Strategic Balance," p. 724.
23. Schlesinger, p. 43.
24. The term "counterforce" is not defined the same way by all strategists. Here it will be used to refer to attacks on the adversary's strategic forces.
25. Gray is particularly sharp in attacking the arithmetic which justifies the optimum size of US strategic forces by explicitly relating dead Soviet citizens to marginal effort. Where diminishing returns (dead people) result from an additional warhead, the maximum size has been reached. "Unsafe At Any Speed: A Critique of 'Stable Deterrence' Doctrine," p. 24.
26. Westervelt, p. 703.
27. Wohlstetter, p. 1127.
28. Russet has published several similar versions of his proposals, two of which are cited in note 2. The analysis in this discussion is primarily based on *Power and Community in World Politics*.
29. Richard M. Nixon, *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: Shaping a Durable Peace*, p. 183.
30. Schlesinger, p. 35.
31. Russet, p. 250.
32. See also Brennan's critique of the ABM Treaty in "Strategic Forum: The SALT Agreements," *Survival*, September-October 1972, pp. 216-219.
33. Chester and Wigner, p. 764.

34. There are many critics. As examples, see Ball; Barry Carter, "Nuclear Strategy and Nuclear Weapons," *Scientific American*, May 1974, pp. 20-21; Robert C. Johansen, "Countercombatant Strategy: A New Balance of Terror Worldview," July 1974, pp. 47-53; Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Deterrence in the MIRV Era," *World Politics*, January 1972, pp. 221-242; Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky, "The Mutual-Hostage Relationship Between America and Russia," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1973, pp. 109-118, and Herbert Scoville, Jr., "Flex Madness?," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1974, pp. 164-177.

35. Ball, p. 170.

36. Rejection of the action-reaction arms race theory is a recurrent theme of these authors. Two of these authors have published extended refutations of it. See Colin Gray, "The Arms Race Phenomena," *World Politics*, October 1971, pp. 73-81, and "The Arms Race Is About Politics," *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1972-73, pp. 117-129; and Albert Wohlstetter, "Is There a Strategic Arms Race?," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1974, pp. 3-20; and "Is There a Strategic Arms Race? (II): Rivet Bombers, Not 'Race'," *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1974, pp. 48-81.

37. Schlesinger, *Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1975*, p. 40.

38. Ball, p. 224.

39. A condemnation of these two studies is not intended. Notwithstanding my inference that the authors treat the consequences of nuclear war relatively lightly, the essays explore important issues and arguments.

40. Gray, "Rethinking Nuclear Strategy," p. 1152.

41. In his "Counter-Combatant Deterrence: A Proposal," Russett excludes counterforce options.

42. Chester and Wigner, p. 763.

43. Schlesinger, *Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1976 and FY 1977*, p. 54.

44. Chester and Wigner, p. 766.

45. Gray, "Rethinking Nuclear Strategy," p. 1153.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 1160.

47. Westervelt, p. 702. He considers the vulnerability of ICBM's and ceilings on their number as the two most important aspects of SALT I. That had never been mentioned before, as he suggests, is incorrect. See Harry Geary, "Nuclear Weapons and Chinese Policy," *Adelphi Papers No. 99*, 1973, p. 29.

48. See Richard Burt, "The Cruise Missile and Arms Control," *Survey*, January-February 1976, pp. 10-17; and "Arms Control and the Cruise Missile: Reconciling a Difficult Equation," *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1975, on possible implications of the new weapons.

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER ACN 76057	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) The New Flexible Strategic Response Doctrine: Insights from Critics of Mutual Assured Destruction		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Military Issues Research Memorandum
7. AUTHOR(s) Dr. Thomas L. Wilborn		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Strategic Studies Institute US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE 13 December 1976
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 30
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Flexible strategic response; assured destruction; counterforce; counter-city; stable deterrence.		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The strategy of flexible strategic response, a significant change in American policy, was preceded by an impressive body of literature which criticized and proposed alternatives to assured destruction, the doctrine which the new strategy replaced. Analysis of a sample of this literature provides a means of exploring the meaning of some of the strategic principles which are encompassed within the new doctrine.		

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The authors being reviewed condemned assured destruction because it ignored the possibility that deterrence could fail or be irrelevant and no longer was credible against less than massive countercity Soviet attacks. Some argued that the old doctrine restricted US diplomacy, while two writers challenged it as immoral. These writers proposed alternatives which were very similar to present US doctrine, although some preferred a defensive strategy or less emphasis on counterforce systems.

Strategic arms limitations are compatible with a flexible strategic response doctrine. The new policy is still opposed by influential officials, so that the debate is likely to continue. Strategic doctrine is sensitive to changes in its environment, and adjustments are probable as political and technological constraints are altered. Nuclear strategy, in any case, involves such nebulous matters that conclusive decisions are unlikely.

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