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In Pursuit of Strategic Stability in NATO

by

Lieutenant Colonel Alvin Washington

Air Defense

Advanced Operational Studies Fellowship

School of Advanced Military Studies
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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Nation states develop and pursue foreign policy based upon their national goals and interests. In their attempts to realize these goals and because of different perceptions of reality, competition develops which may even lead to conflict. An increase in conflict between nation states can lead to war. In this age of nuclear weapons, it is in every nation's best interest to seek conflict resolution prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The advent of nuclear weapons with their massive lethality and destructive capability forced nations to rethink their attitudes toward war and the entire spectrum of conflict. The mere existence of these weapons threaten the nations that developed them as a means of protection. Nuclear weapons are a means which if used, they may very well lead to the destruction of the ends that are sought. Rationality suppresses actions which might lead to absolute war as defined by Clausewitz for fear of total annihilation of the nation. So with weapons of such devastation and such high risks of total destruction in the event				
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of war, the wise and prudent action by a nation is to seek a condition of stable equilibrium in which neither side sees any possibility of gain in a direct military confrontation. In a global perspective, this condition of stable equilibrium evolves into strategic stability.

The term strategic stability is surrounded by tremendous controversy. In the text of this monograph it is defined as a situation between adversaries in which they are deterred from war on a strategic level (involving attacks against industrial base, center of population, or strategic military forces).

The purpose of this paper is to examine U.S. national military strategy and assess to what extent current military doctrine on the employment of conventional forces has kept pace with the realities of the nuclear age. I will examine the viability and role of conventional forces in NATO and give an assesment of their deterrence credibility and contribution to the NATO triad defense posture of conventional, theater nuclear and strategic nuclear forces. This analysis should prove to be militarily significant by providing an in depth look at current U.S. strategy concerning conventional forces deployed in NATO.

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ABSTRACT

IN PURSUIT OF STRATEGIC STABILITY IN NATO

by LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALVIN WASHINGTON, USA, 54 Pages

Nation states develop and pursue foreign policy based upon their national goals and interests. In their attempts to realize these goals and because of different perceptions of reality, competition develops which may even lead to conflict. An increase in conflict between nation states can lead to war. In this age of nuclear weapons, it is in every nation's best interest to seek conflict resolution prior to the outbreak of hostilities.

The advent of nuclear weapons with their massive lethality and destructive capability forced nations to rethink their attitudes toward war and the entire spectrum of conflict. The mere existence of these weapons threaten the nations that developed them as a means of protection. Nuclear weapons are a means which if used, they may very well lead to the destruction of the ends that are sought. Rationality suppresses actions which might lead to absolute war as defined by Clausewitz for fear of total annihilation of the nation.

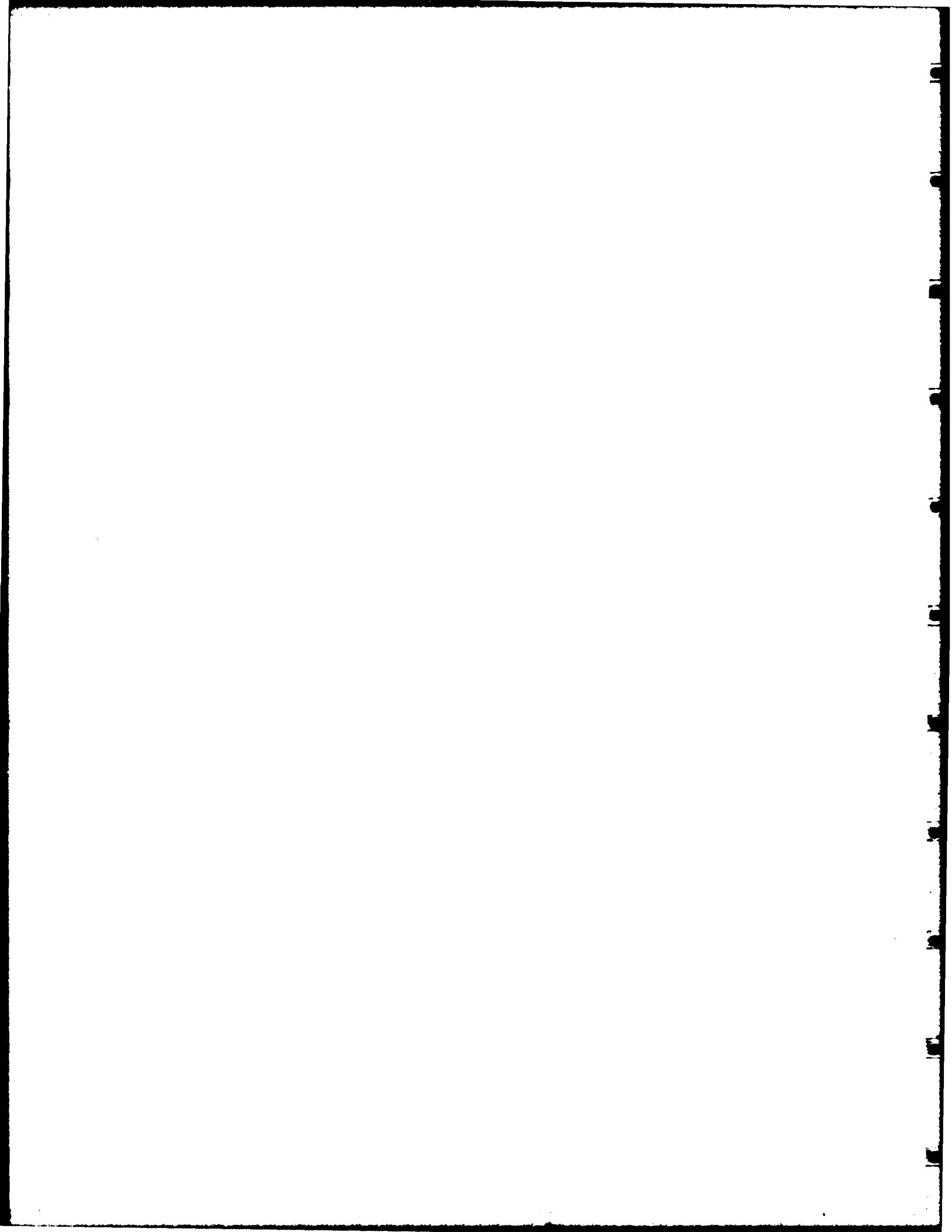
So with weapons of such devastation and such high risks of total destruction in the event of war, the wise and prudent action by a nation is to seek a condition of stable equilibrium in which neither side sees any possibility of gain in a direct military confrontation. In a global perspective, this condition of stable equilibrium evolves into strategic stability.

The term strategic stability is surrounded by tremendous controversy. In the text of this monograph it is defined as a situation between adversaries in which they are deterred from war on a strategic level (involving attacks against industrial base, center of population, or strategic military forces).

The purpose of this paper is to examine U.S. national military strategy and assess to what extent current military doctrine on the employment of conventional forces has kept pace with the realities of the nuclear age. I will examine the viability and role of conventional forces in NATO and give an assesment of their deterrence credibility and contribution to the NATO triad defense posture of conventional, theater nuclear and strategic nuclear forces. This analysis should prove to be militarily significant by providing an in depth look at current U.S. strategy concerning conventional forces deployed in NATO. (FR)

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In Pursuit of Strategic Stability In NATO

Section I: Introduction

For centuries, nations have struggled among each other. But we dream of a world where disputes are settled by law and reason. And we will try to make it so...(1)

Lyndon B. Johnson

Nation states develop and pursue foreign policy objectives based upon their national goals and interests. In their attempts to realize these goals and because of different perceptions of reality, competition develops which may lead to conflict and tension. Amplification and exacerbation of this conflict between nation states can lead to war.

The United States has determined that solely pursuing stable relations with the Soviet Union is not enough to guarantee peace and security. Not only are the superpowers deterred from high-risk diplomacy, they are also insufficiently dominant to impose similar restraints on the lesser powers. The United States continues to promote international stability. The U.S. seeks an international order that encourages self-determination, democratic institutions, economic development and human rights. From a military perspective it endeavors to deter and contain the uses of violence by other nations. The Soviet Union, however, appears to follow a design

focused on the exploitation of the instabilities of the underdeveloped nations in pursuit of its avowed policy to promote communist revolution throughout the world.

Pursuit of this course of action obviously clashes with U.S. objectives which are based on the assumption that instability and disorder threaten world peace and, therefore, American security. The United States has global interests and commitments which are best pursued and achieved within a stable, peaceful international community. Continued instances of armed conflict, international terrorism, and regional instability adversely affect the United States and its allies with potential global implications.

The Soviet Union has built, and continues to build, a military force far greater than it needs for self-defense. This tremendous armed forces buildup has global significance. Soviet military capabilities have placed unprecedented pressure on American and allied defense strategies and threaten international stability. The apparent purpose of this Soviet armed forces buildup is to reduce the options available to the United States and its allies.(2) The heavy dependence of the Soviet Union on military capabilities and their expansionist policies pose a tremendous threat to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The advent of nuclear weapons, with their massive lethality and

destructive capability, has forced nations to rethink their attitudes toward war and the entire spectrum of conflict. The consequences of war have become potentially catastrophic. It is in every nation's interest to seek conflict resolution prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The mere existence of these weapons threaten the nations that developed them as a means of protection. Nuclear weapons are a means, which if used, may very well lead to the destruction of the ends that are sought. Rationality suppresses actions which might lead to absolute war in the Clausewitzian sense.

(3)

Both sides must be deterred from the use of nuclear weapons. There is nothing really new in the fundamentals of deterrence. Deterrence involves the avoidance of war by threatening punitive military action, thus making armed confrontation less tempting than any other alternative open to an adversary.(4) This approach has proven to be an effective strategy for the United States. However, there is an irony in the fact that the premise of war avoidance requires a commitment to go to war if deterrence fails.(5)

Deterrence operates through the "skillful nonuse of military forces" by manipulating military threats in a way that makes resorting to armed force too costly in comparison to the values the aggressor hopes to gain. For the United States, resorting to force should be less costly than the loss of the values that it seeks to

protect, otherwise, there would be no rationality in carrying out the deterrent threat.(6) The United States and the Soviet Union both have mutually balancing forces which threaten each other with terrible destruction.

Considering the large superpower arsenals of nuclear weapons and the high risks of total destruction associated with general war, the prudent course for either superpower is to seek a condition of stable equilibrium in which neither side sees any possibility of gain in a direct military confrontation. In a global or theater perspective, this condition of stable equilibrium evolves into strategic stability.

Tremendous controversy surrounds the term "strategic stability". In the text of this monograph it is defined as "a situation between adversaries in which they are unlikely to fight a strategic war (i.e. a war involving attacks against industry, population or strategic military forces)".(7)

NATO's current defense posture is the result of a complex series of events and political decisions. Many debates have taken place concerning how to achieve strategic stability.

Attaining that stability clearly requires a strong NATO military capability. This military capability must be perceived as

formidable by the Soviet Union or it will have little deterrent value. With the heavy reliance on nuclear deterrence, many questions have surfaced regarding conventional force capability (and even value) in Western Europe. In this age of nuclear weaponry, what is the role of conventional forces? Have nuclear weapons significantly altered the employment of conventional forces in NATO? To what extent do conventional forces remain part of a credible deterrent in NATO? This investigative effort will address these issues.

The focus of this study is to determine to what extent current U.S. military thinking concerning the employment of conventional forces in NATO has kept pace with nuclear realities. The paper will begin with a discussion of the evolution of U.S. nuclear strategy. This will be followed by a discussion regarding the Soviet Union's perception and views on security in the nuclear age. Focus will then be shifted to address the meaning of strategic stability. Finally a conclusion will be presented addressing the feasibility and requirements for achieving and maintaining strategic stability to year the 2000.

Section II: U.S. Strategy Evolution

"We must expect that nations will on occasion be in dispute with us. It may be because we are rich, or powerful, or because we have made mistakes, or because they honestly fear our intentions. However, no nation need ever fear that we desire their land, or to impose our will, or dictate their institutions. But we will always oppose the effort of one nation to conquer another nation. We will do this because our own security is at stake."(8)

Lyndon B. Johnson

Since the 1945 bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki no atomic weapon has been used in anger. At the time of its initial use, the United States was the only possessor of these massive weapons of destruction . However, in September 1949 the Soviet Union successfully tested its first atomic device, thus ending the U.S. monopoly of these weapons. Through subsequent decades the two superpowers have accumulated thousands of nuclear weapons possessing immensely increased total yield and lethality. Most important, the new Soviet nuclear capability meant that decisions on the role of these weapons was no longer solely the prerogative of the United States. And yet to this present date, only two have been employed in an act of war by any nation on earth. One could therefore conclude that the study of nuclear strategy is the study of the non-use of these weapons.(9)

The past provides almost no precedent on how to employ these weapons in combat. Yet, due to their military and strategic significance, men have continually sought to develop nuclear strategy in order to determine their use in peace and war for the achievement of political ends. The stakes in developing a nuclear strategy are incredibly high with the consequences for incorrect assessment ranging from a limited nuclear exchange to mutual destruction.

A competition rapidly developed between the superpowers to produce more nuclear weapons of greater destructive capability than the other. As more nuclear weapons were produced, it became increasingly clear that their use would result in catastrophic consequences for the civilized world. Fundamentally both sides agreed that nuclear weapons must never be used for military purposes. In his famous presentation to a session of the Soviet Communist Party Nikita Khrushchev stated, "Nuclear war can have no victor, because they would end in mutual destruction; and even conventional wars are too dangerous, because they might escalate into nuclear war".(10)

So the superpowers began to increase the combat readiness of their conventional forces. In pursuit of this objective, exorbitant cost quickly became a major limiting factor. Realizing the resource constraints, the U.S. determined that the only way to reduce cost without appearing to renege on its commitments to NATO was to relax constraints surrounding use of nuclear weapons and to substitute nuclear for conventional firepower.

In a continuing effort to prevent an East-West confrontation which might lead to nuclear war, the U.S. developed a strategy based on nuclear deterrence. In January 1954, U.S. Secretary of

State John Foster Dulles announced that the United States intended to deter aggression by relying "primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our own choosing".(11) This policy became known as massive retaliation and drew immediate world-wide negative criticism.

One of the first academic critiques of the massive retaliation policy was presented by William Kaufman in which he explained that "If the Communists should challenge our security and they would have good reasons for daring to do so, we would either have to put up or shut up. If we put up, we would plunge into all the immeasurable horrors of atomic war. If we shut up, we would suffer a serious loss of prestige and damage our capacity to establish deterrents against further Communist expansion".(12)

The U.S. was quick to see the faulty logic of massive retaliation. The Soviet military challenge was steadily growing in Europe. With this growing threat, Germany adopted a military objective of forward defense of its borders. This objective was believed unattainable through conventional forces alone based upon the quantitative superiority of Warsaw Pact forces. To offset West Germany's heavy reliance on conventional forces the U.S. firmly implanted the concept of nuclear deterrence in Western strategy. However, this strategy also drew heated

criticism and was unable to stand up to scrutiny.

By 1956 a complete review of U.S. strategy was underway. Policy makers accepted that strategic stability did not lie in a position of nuclear superiority or in trying to close the conventional weapons imbalance. The U.S. then adopted a strategy based on the concept of balance of terror. Under this concept the U.S. hoped that potential aggressors would be deterred from initiating an attack against the West through fear of a nuclear war. The U.S. saw no benefit in continuing its efforts for nuclear superiority. It was believed that deterrence could be achieved by possessing a credible nuclear capability and showing the resolve to use it if threatened.

At this time a growing school developed which believed that low-yield, short range nuclear weapons were appropriate weapons for the battlefield. These tactical nuclear weapons could be used very effectively against military targets such as concentrated troop formations and thus prevent the massing of forces on the battlefield. European alliances were particularly in favor of obtaining this capability in view of Soviet equipment and manpower superiority.

This strategy presented two gross disadvantages. The first was that employment of battlefield nuclear weapons required more

ground forces. This type of limited nuclear warfare would actually develop into a war of force attrition. Thus the side with the largest numbers would ultimately prevail. Secondly, there were no guarantees that limited nuclear warfare would not escalate into an all-out nuclear war. This national strategy based upon the concept of limited nuclear warfare did not last long and many previous enthusiasts withdrew their support.

The abandonment of the limited nuclear warfare concept led to a strategy based on retaliatory capability. It was argued that once a nation possessed a retaliatory capability, it would be insane to initiate nuclear hostilities. This strategy was particularly significant in view of the long-standing assumption that the next war would inevitably start with a surprise nuclear attack. Mobile and protected retaliatory forces would assure a retaliatory capability even if the enemy struck first.

But the concept of the retaliatory capability did not address all issues associated with a possible sneak Soviet attack against bases of the Strategic Air Command. In 1954, the Rand Corporation conducted studies which concluded that U.S. air bases were extremely vulnerable to surprise attack. If the Soviet Union developed a surprise attack capability, the U.S. would be facing a tremendous threat to its survival for which it possessed no counter. It was conceivable that the Soviet Union,

could achieve a decisive victory against the United States, through surprise.

The Rand Corporation's technical assessment of strategic air bases was also instrumental in identifying the flawed logic involved in relying on a retaliatory capability. It identified problems such as surviving an enemy attack, communicating a decision to retaliate, penetrating active air defenses, and overcoming passive civil defense.

Retaliatory capability continued to draw harsh criticism and in 1959 Bernard Brodie stated "Our ability to retaliate in great force to a direct Soviet attack is taken far too much for granted by almost everybody, including our highest national policy-makers".(13) In support of this position, Henry Kissinger later wrote "A precondition of deterrence is an invulnerable retaliatory force."(14) Deterrence could not be based upon a retaliatory capability which was vulnerable to surprise attack.

One of the instrumental figures in conducting the 1954 Rand Corporation study was Albert Wohlstetter. He has become one of the most vocal critics of retaliatory capability and has made numerous significant contributions in the area of strategic analysis. Wohlstetter introduced the critical concepts of first

strike and second strike which have been a focal point of strategic debate ever since. Additionally, these concepts are relevant to the questions of preemption and vulnerability.

A first strike capability does not simply refer to the first launch of a nuclear exchange but to an attack directed against the enemy's retaliatory capability. A second strike capability refers to the ability of a state to absorb a first strike and still inflict a devastating retaliation on the enemy. The primary requirement for a second strike capability is that it must be survivable during a nuclear exchange. First strike forces had to be able to attack the military assets of the enemy, but it was not essential that they be survivable.

This concept of first-second strike capabilities surfaced a significant U.S. concern for their security. Both sides were hastily working to develop a first-strike capability before the other side achieved it. In pursuing this goal, both sides became extremely mistrustful of the other. This mistrust further developed into the almost inevitable confrontation out of fear. This intense mistrust and fear of the other side only contributed to greater strategic instability.

The search for strategic stability continued at a frantic pace. The condition of stability based upon invulnerable

retaliatory forces became throughly accepted and sought. The log was simple: without invulnerable retaliatory forces, a nuclear exchange would ensure the complete destruction of both sides. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara is credited with coining the phrase "mutually assured destruction" (MAD) to describe this policy. MAD was defined as "the ability to deter a deliberate nuclear attack upon the United States or its allies by maintaining at all times a clear and unmistakable ability to inflict an unacceptable degree of damage upon the aggressor, or combination of aggressors -- even after absorbing a surprise first strike." (15) MAD embraced the concept that if both sides were able to insure unacceptable levels of damage on the other, the risks associated with aggressive action would be so great that deterrence would succeed.

In seeking to insure that the MAD capability was retained at all costs, both sides were forced to embark upon an arms race of unbelievable proportions in an effort to retain guaranteed destruction of the other side. This arms race led to dramatic breakthroughs in technology. The arms escalation appeared to have no end and continued at an awesome rate.

During the period 1960 to mid-1970, developments in weapon technology shaped deterrence strategy. This technology included multiple warheads atop single missiles, the reduction of

yield-to-weight ratios, the growing capacity of communications, command, control, and surveillance systems and advancements in precision munitions, just to cite a few. Both sides sought to control this run away arms race through negotiated restraints. In 1972 the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty was signed in Moscow.

In 1974 Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger announced that a range of selective nuclear options would be developed to reduce dependence on threats of assured destruction. These attempts continued under the Carter administration. In 1980 Secretary of Defense Harold Brown announced a new strategic nuclear strategy based upon the policy of escalation dominance.

This policy (Presidential Directive) dictated that "the United States must have countervailing strategic options such that at a variety of levels of exchange, aggression would either be defeated or would result in unacceptable costs that exceeded gains.... In general, the need to be prepared for large-scale but less than all-out exchange, is most applicable to a situation in which tactical nuclear weapons have already been used. In such a context, it would be critical that the Soviet Union continue to believe that there is no intermediate level of escalation at which their use could be successful."(16)

The basic concept of escalation strategy was that in the event the Soviet Union moved up the escalation ladder, the United States would be able to respond effectively at each level. But this concept required reassessment. If the Soviets launched a first strike and destroyed America's ICBMs, that would leave the U.S. unable to respond in kind, therefore forcing escalation to a higher unacceptable level. This concept therefore failed a critical test of a viable nuclear strategy.

As early as 1950 B. H. Liddell Hart argued that it was a mistake to assume that nuclear weapons had made other forms of weapons obsolete and against placing too much reliance on them. He suggested that when both sides possessed nuclear weapons, this would very likely deter their use. Hart expressed considerable doubt concerning theories designed to prevent war, but felt strongly that a nation should strive to limit war so that it did not result in total destruction. To do this, he proposed strong, mechanized conventional forces capable of defeating the conventional threat facing NATO and that might arise in other areas of the world.(17)

Western experts criticized over reliance upon nuclear weapons as a deterrent strongly. Many Americans did not accept the logic that because NATO did not maintain credible conventional forces in Western Europe, a Soviet conventional

attack would automatically trigger a nuclear defensive reaction. This they feared would lead to a like response by the Soviet Union and therefore to nuclear escalation. Obviously this was an unacceptable option.

The realization that the Western nations could not base a defense strategy solely on the threat to use nuclear capabilities was the genesis for adoption of the policy known as "flexible response." Flexible response has been United States policy since 1961 and NATO policy since 1967. This concept advocates viable forward conventional defenses to meet any possible Soviet invasion. If these conventional defenses were unable to stop the invasion, NATO would implement a graduated nuclear response. This could be in the form of an isolated engagement against massed troops or a demonstration shot in hopes of persuading the Soviet Union that NATO does have the resolve to use nuclear options and that they should halt aggressions. In the event that action failed, NATO would then climb the ladder of escalation one rung at a time until one side called a halt to the nuclear exchange out of fear of mutual destruction.(18)

National military objectives of the United States have long been to deter conflict. If deterrence fails, the objectives become; (1) to defeat Soviet war aims; (2) to limit damage to

the U.S. and its allies; (3) to terminate hostilities as quickly as possible; and (4) to prevent Soviet coercion. To achieve these military objectives the U.S. has always sought to develop a viable and coherent strategy. The development of this strategy has often been geared to the defense budget. These strategies have required continual reexamination and reassessment to insure their credibility.(19)

The current U.S. national strategy has evolved to one based flexible response by credible conventional counterforce capabilities backed by wide range of effective and discriminate nuclear options. This provides the President with a full range of response options from which to select. This strategy requires highly capable military forces. But the question as to what constitutes a capable and credible force must be addressed in relation to an active opponent, his capabilities, and the goals he seeks to attain.

Section III: Soviet Perspectives on Security

This section will address the Soviet perception of its own security requirements. It is important to understand that issues of security policy are often questions of perception, rather than absolute reality. The determination of Soviet

security policy is further complicated by the lack of available information. The Soviet Union is a closed society and maintains severe restraints on the access to information.

In 1971 the 24th Party Congress of the Soviet Union introduced a new defense and security strategy called the "peace program." It was concerned with four major security issues. These were the security of the Warsaw Pact Alliance, detente with the United States, competition with China, and the question of Western leadership succession. The Party Congress concluded that these four concerns could be reduced to the basic issue of whether the Soviet Union could afford to compete and coexist in Central Europe under conditions of near conventional parity.

However, in recent years the Soviet Union appears to have embarked on a very different national security strategy. At the 27th Communist Party Congress in February 1986, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev indicated that Soviet leaders are prepared to do anything "to improve radically the international situation".(20) He acknowledged that conventional and nuclear force holdings are inordinately high and that man now possesses the capability to destroy all life on earth. Mr. Gorbachev emphasized the importance of arms control and comprehensive verification procedures. He further called for a considerable reduction in the intensity of military confrontation and a

comprehensive system of international security. Despite these pronouncements, however, there remains a great gulf between Gorbachev's words and Soviet actions.(21)

A review of recent Soviet actions around the world clearly indicates these contradictions. In August 1987 the Soviet Union completed a Soviet-Iranian agreement of cooperation. This agreement has become the cornerstone of an emerging Soviet strategy in the Persian Gulf. It outlines an effort to build a direct rail link and an oil pipeline between the two countries. Completion of this effort will reshape drastically the strategic and political balance of the entire region. It constitutes a significant expansion of Soviet influence in Iran and in the entire Persian Gulf region. This action brings the Soviet Union closer to gaining access to a warm-water Persian Gulf port.

In this same region the Soviet Union has made significant and steady gains in Asia over the past year inspite of its recent declaration to withdraw military forces from Afghanistan. Its influence will continue in Southwest Asia through the foreseeable future.

In Asia the Soviet Union continues to strengthen its ties with India by upgrading India's military forces. At the same time the Soviet Union has endeavored to mend fences with China

through economic and diplomatic overtures. The most significant gain in the region has been the steady build-up of Cam Ranh Bay as the chief Soviet air and naval base in Southeast Asia. This move poses an immediate threat to regional U.S. allies and their sea lanes of communication with Japan. (23)

In Central America the Soviet Union has made significant strides toward securing a second base in the Western Hemisphere. The ability of the Soviet Union to use both Cuba and Nicaragua as bases of operations will severely diminish U.S. strategic flexibility in the Western Hemisphere. The Soviet foothold in Nicaragua will undoubtedly be used to initiate and support insurgencies throughout Central and South America.(24)

These recent actions undertaken by the Soviet Union reflect certain key foreign policy objectives. These objectives are well defined and are pursued with great tenacity and skillful diplomacy. The first objective is to expand world power and influence, ultimately seeking world domination. This is to be accomplished by strengthening control of Soviet bloc members and neutralizing centers of international competition. The second Soviet objective is to avoid general war or acute crisis.(25)

These foreign policy objectives are in turn supported by military goals. The first strategic objective of the Soviet

Union is to field military forces capable of waging a successful war. Secondly, the Soviet Union seeks to maintain a military superiority over the West. Finally the Soviet Union seeks arms control policies that preserve already established military advantages.

This last objective has been especially exploited by the Soviet Union. The Soviets have used this gambit to restrain Free World arms modernization programs and to facilitate their own drive for nuclear superiority.(26) The reality is that, since the beginning of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), the Soviets have developed and fielded the very force capabilities that were supposed to be prevented by arms control. The Soviet Union has attempted to prolong the SALT negotiation process for three reasons: first, to maintain and expand their nuclear advantage; second, to prevent the United States and its allies from developing and deploying an anti-ballistic missile defense system; and third, preserve their own monopoly in ballistic missile defense systems.(27)

Soviet military strategic goals are equally consistent when translated into theater strategic execution doctrine. In the European theater the essential difference between the Soviet and the Western view of conventional warfare is that the Soviet Union believes that the offense is the best form of

defense.(28) The ability and willingness to take the offensive, in order to preempt offensive action by the enemy, has been a consistent theme in Soviet military doctrine. However, this view is being modified recently by an emerging emphasis on strategic defense.(29) The cornerstone of Soviet theater strategy is the element of surprise. In the event of war with NATO the Soviet Union places great emphasis on seizing the initiative through deception and surprise.(30)

With regard to a possible future conflict the Soviet Union views war with the West as a very distinct possibility. For this reason their entire approach to war is very objective and rational. The Soviet view is that such a war would be a total war that would be prosecuted to the extreme with the most decisive arms. This war could very likely escalate to a nuclear exchange.(31)

Although such a war would clearly inflict tremendous destruction, the Soviets do not necessarily believe it would end human existence. Despite the destruction, the Soviet Union believes that they can survive and win such a war. Thus Soviet preparation to fight and win global nuclear war is the most important task of Soviet security strategy.(32)

Section IV: Meaning of Strategic Stability

Today's world is an extremely volatile place. Despite this worldwide instability, United States national strategy has experienced some success. It has deterred war in Central Europe and in Korea for nearly 40 years. Its support of NATO has created the most enduring multilateral alliance in modern history. However the U.S. national strategy has also experienced its share of set-backs, especially in the Middle East, Africa, Southern Asia, and Central America. But most significant, the United States has not kept pace with Soviet conventional threat in Central Europe. It is against this backdrop of success and failure that the United States must achieve a semblance of stability.

Although controversy still surrounds the very meaning of strategy, strategic stability can be defined "as a condition in which the USSR does not perceive that it can benefit by initiating war or by taking risks of military confrontation, and in which U.S. behavior is seen as calm, firm and stable by the Soviet Union".(33) This is a constant dynamic situation. When analyzing the problem of how to reduce the risk of war, three major factors can be identified. They are:

- (1) Continue the committed search to achieve military balance, either by arms control or force structure changes, or both;
- (2) Promote democratic values, unity and strength; and

(3) Pursue steady efforts to resolve regional conflicts in ways that minimize the potential for East-West military confrontation.(34)

Strategic stability must encompass measures to reduce the risks of war as well as measures that reduce Soviet incentives to conduct aggression against the West. A major aim of Soviet political policy is to divide and to reduce U.S. global influence without resorting to armed confrontation. This Soviet aim is in direct conflict with U.S. objectives. U.S. national strategy has been driven preeminently by the need to support its foreign policy interests. Edward N. Luttwak argues that "the U.S. has purchased countermilitary strategic capabilities over the past thirty years because superpowers, like other institutions known to us, are in the protection business. When they cannot protect clients, they lose influence, not just locally but worldwide."(35)

Strategic stability requires a concerted effort to guard against Soviet attack or intimidation by maintaining effective deterrence. Bilateral mutual nuclear deterrence is not enough to maintain the balance of strategic stability. Commitments for protection against nuclear threat or attack, coupled with demonstrated restraint and responsible in the ownership of nuclear capabilities, are all necessary elements of global stability.

A vital condition of strategic stability in Soviet-American relations is the preservation and strengthening of extended deterrence. Since post-World War II, one central objection to

Western security strategy has been the goal to deter Soviet attack against an ally of the United States. Viable deterrence clearly assumes the existence of an adequate capability on the part of the United States to deny Soviet attack objectives.(36)

Stability through deterrence also requires that the U.S. make it clear to the Soviet Union that it has the means and the resolve to respond powerfully to any acts of aggression against U.S. interests. At the same time the United States must avoid specifying the exact nature of the deterrent response.

To deter aggression, NATO relies on the military capability of conventional and nuclear forces. A strong possibility confronts the Soviet Union that the probable costs associated with an attack will far exceed the probable gains. To deter nuclear attack the United States relies on a credible warning capability and offensive nuclear forces. In the event that deterrence fails, the U.S. strives to limit damage to American and allied territory and to terminate hostilities on terms that best secure U.S. and allied interests. It is paramount that sufficient U.S. nuclear capabilities survive under all circumstances to execute a retaliatory strike.(37)

Sole reliance on conventional forces by NATO, even with resource constraints relaxed, would fail to counter Soviet selective use of nuclear weapons against the alliance. Nor is sole reliance on the nuclear option sufficient for deterrence. The U.S. goal is to deter

war across the conventional through strategic nuclear spectrum. Stability therefore requires that all elements in the West's military posture, including its strategic nuclear forces, support those policies which seek to preserve vital Western interests and national security. The U.S. can pursue many positive efforts unilaterally so as to promote a greater degree of strategic stability, but ultimate success requires some degree of cooperation with (and from) the Soviet Union.

Section V: Conclusion/Analysis

"It is absurd that it should have become necessary, over a generation into the nuclear age, to reassert the obvious: that a nuclear war between the super-powers would be a catastrophe, not just for this or that country, but for human civilization.

But it needs to be said."(38)

Adam Roberts

One could offer the premise that the main function of nuclear weapons since their initial use in 1945 has been as an instrument of diplomatic bargaining. Fortunately all wars since that time have remained limited and conventional.(39) In the nuclear age it appears that absolute war as described by Clausewitz seems conceivable at last. On the other hand Clausewitz's famous dictum, that "war is nothing but a continuation of policy with other means, simply the continuation of policy with the admixture of other means," seems to have been inverted.(40) For two nuclear-capable nations to

embark on war against each other could not possibly be regarded as continuing a rational policy by other means. Military thinkers now suggest that the means for waging war have far exceeded the objectives war can achieve.(41) Nations tend to act in their own best interests. However rationality does not always prevail in crisis situations. Additionally, a nation can not base its national security strategy on the assumption of rational actions on the part of an adversary. One must recognize prudently that there is tremendous uncertainty concerning what deters. Colin Gray offers the caution that "history shows that folly in high places is always possible."(42) Finally Adam Roberts says "in tackling nuclear problems, man has more power than wisdom at his disposal."(43)

There are several events which serve as examples of international instability. In 1979 the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan by force of arms. The continuous series of wars in the Middle East and the 1982 Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands all serve as reminders that some countries of the world still view armed confrontation as an acceptable means to achieve their political goals.

Despite these occurrences of international instability, no war has broken out in Central Europe since World War II. This region has experienced more than forty years of peace and economic prosperity. Many contend that the presence of nuclear weapons have kept peace in

Europe. Others cite the memory of two World Wars fought largely in Europe and also the presence of two major outside powers as factors of stability. All of these factors have had an affect in differing degrees on European stability, but most authorities agree that the nuclear presence is the major factor.

Using the 1967 Harmel Report as its basis, NATO defined its two major functions. Its first function was to "maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure, and to defend the territory of member countries if aggression should occur." (44) The maintenance of a suitable military capability to assure a balance of forces would create a climate in which "the Alliance can carry out its second function, to pursue the search for progress towards a more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved." (45) NATO reached agreement that "military security and a policy of detente are not contradictory but complementary." (46)

A review of the evolution of the concept of strategic stability readily reveals many different meanings and interpretations. Continuing through to the early 1960s, strategic stability was still embraced as a key objective of U.S. nuclear policy. During this same period, it was directly linked to the concept of mutual assured destruction (MAD). The MAD principle developed by Robert McNamara held that attacks on US territories could be deterred by threatening

potential attackers with massive destruction of population and industrial centers.

Another school of thought during this period placed strategic stability in the context of arms race stability. It was believed that neither side would invest in programs that challenge the other's assured destructive capability.(47) Former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown viewed this as a way to ensure the balance of nuclear forces was not unbalanced by sudden Soviet technological breakthroughs. Dr. Brown believed that strategic stability could only be maintained by vigorous strategic research and development and technical intelligence efforts.(48)

Another theme which gained significant support related strategic stability to crisis stability. Dr. Brown defined crisis stability as a condition where opposing forces were so balanced that neither would feel pressured to initiate a nuclear exchange in a crisis situation.(49) Thomas Schelling summarized the concept by stating:

"It is not the balance--the equality or symmetry in the situation--it is the stability of the balance.... [It] is stable only when neither, in striking first, can destroy the other's ability to strike back. (50)

Although this brief summary of the evolution of strategic stability is not all-inclusive, it does reveal the lack of consensus as to its application. In the early 1980s, however, important studies on U.S. and Soviet forces, strategy, and

doctrine began to have significant impact on US deterrence philosophy. There became "a growing agreement within the western defense community that the concept of stability could not rest upon the threat of massive societal destruction... Such damage is unacceptable to the US, while it may be 'insufficiently unacceptable' to Soviet politicians." (51) Additionally, it was determined that "there are no Soviet equivalents to U.S. theories of deterrence and stability." (52)

It also understood that Soviet perceptions of what deters were radically different from American views. Deterrence philosophy was therefore reoriented to reflect the Soviet point of view. In 1983 the Scowcroft Commission summarized this revised thinking:

"Deterrence can not be bluff...for it to be effective. We must not merely have weapons, we must be perceived to be able...to use them effectively against key Soviet elements of power. Deterrence is not...a mirror-image of what deters ourselves...but beliefs of Soviet leaders...about our capabilities and will! (53)

The essence of this revised U.S. concept is that it attempts to view the issue of deterrence through the eyes of Soviet leaders, adding a Soviet perception, and not view the issue solely from a U.S. strategic perspective. Furthermore, the Scowcroft commission determined the key to revitalizing the strategic stability concept was significantly dependent on linking it to the contemporary U.S. deterrence philosophy. (54)

From the Soviet viewpoint it has constantly sought to improve its superior conventional ground and air forces at least since the mid-sixties. At the same time the Soviets have developed large, diverse, and survivable strategic and regional nuclear forces for the purpose of neutralizing NATO's nuclear deterrent.

At the present time NATO's deterrence philosophy is denial through flexible response. This concept was formulated in order to demonstrate Allied determination to resist Soviet aggression at any level and NATO's willingness to escalate the conflict to whatever level was necessary to bring the confrontation to an end. The effectiveness of flexible response is contingent upon sufficient military capabilities at all levels. Recent negotiations however have thrown the whole issue of strategic stability into question.

Under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty signed on 8 December 1987 NATO missile systems within the range span of more than 500 kilometers but less than 5,500 kilometers were eliminated. This resulted primarily in the elimination of Pershing II and Ground Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM) systems. These systems provided a response capability that filled the gap in our spectrum of deterrence. Originally they presented a

strong signal of U.S. commitment to use nuclear weapons in defense of NATO.(55) Therefore, the elimination of these missile systems now creat a tremendous gap in NATO's spectrum of deterrence. First, they coupled the Soviet homeland with the European theater. Second, they enhanced deterrence by providing NATO with a means to respond to a nuclear attack short of a general strategic exchange.(56)

In an analysis of the current conventional level, corrective action is also urgently needed. The conventional component has been the weakest element of the NATO triad since the inception of the alliance. In 1982, the former Supreme Allied Commander-Europe, General Bernard Rogers stated, "Although Allied Command Europe gets stronger every year, the gap between conventional force capabilities of NATO and those of the Warsaw Pact gets wider each year."(59) He has continually warned that the conventional capabilities of the Alliance are clearly inadequate to meet the ever growing Warsaw Pact conventional threat. He further cautioned that this conventional inadequacy might force NATO into a situation which could force reliance upon a very early use of nuclear weapons.(58) It is imperative that NATO reduce its dependence on an early use of nuclear weapons. NATO must be capable of implementing its strategy, and stronger conventional capabilities are the prerequisite for any flexibility in response.

At the risk of stating the obvious, in the nuclear age credible deterrence is not achieved by conventional weapons alone. Nuclear weapons are an indispensable element in the deterrence equation. Without the nuclear component of our deterrent posture the potential for a conventional war would be extremely high. "Objects at rest can do enormous work--if these objects are such things as nuclear weapons."(59) Without the nuclear factor, the Warsaw Pact's conventional superiority would gain dominance. With the elimination of the nuclear capability, the one constraint which has kept the Soviet Union from using military force in pursuing her political objectives in Western Europe would be removed.(60)

NATO's deterrence also relies heavily on the close linkage of its conventional and theater nuclear forces in Europe to the strategic nuclear potential of the United States. This meshed and inseparable link between the three elements of the NATO triad confronts the Soviet Union with the incalculable risk that any military conflict between the two alliances could escalate to a state of general war. Within the triad, conventional warfighting capability has gained particular importance.

In looking toward the end of the century, more robust conventional forces would compliment the deterrent potential of

nuclear weapons, and therefore contribute significantly to strategic stability. Present NATO conventional defense deficiencies would require the use of nuclear weapons early in war. The failure to improve conventional defense erodes the alliance's ability to respond effectively to world crises and contingencies. The Soviet Union's offensive military posture in Europe remains the primary cause of instability in this region. But NATO Alliance force structure, in some respects, is equally unstable. Western Europe's conventional forces remain insufficiently mobile, too weak in firepower, and too limited in range to provide sufficient confidence that they can withstand an initial attack and contain the momentum of subsequent attacks. The present Western conventional force posture has shown that the alliance nations cannot deal with Third World contingencies without drawing on forces dedicated to, and located in, the NATO theater.(61)

In order for NATO's conventional defense structure to be effective, it is not necessary to achieve a conventional equilibrium. The NATO Alliance does not have to achieve parity with the Warsaw Pact division for division or tank for tank. However, deterrence would be dangerously weakened if the Soviets were allowed to field a major military capability which was completely unmatched by a countervailing NATO capability.(64) What is required is a conventional capability to deny the Warsaw

Pact those operational options which promise rapid success with a high degree of confidence. Any plan for strengthening conventional deterrence and defensive posture should begin with a threat analysis which focuses on Soviet strategy and operational concepts, their vulnerabilities, and the NATO capabilities required to exploit such vulnerabilities, instead of from the traditional NATO/Warsaw Pact force comparison. Only in this functional comparison can a true doctrine of strategic stability be developed.

In addressing the subject of the Warsaw Pact's overwhelming superiority in conventional force structure it has become militarily fashionable to cite the technological advantage of the West as a counterbalance to this Soviet advantage. Many of the proposals made for strengthening NATO conventional capabilities focus on advances in military technology. In the quest for strategic stability, technology cannot be considered a military panacea. It cannot cure all ills in Western conventional forces. The opposition, if it is willing to invest comparable effort and resources, has so far always been able to either catch up or give the perception of doing so. The rate of technological erosion since World War II has remained very high.

NATO efforts to strengthen conventional deterrence and defense must include other necessary adjustments such as

improvements in sustainability, mobilization, readiness, training, interoperability of forces, the development of common operational doctrine, and the coupling of force development to doctrinal requirements. These improvements cannot be achieved without additional defense expenditures.(63)

As the two superpower alliances look forward to the 21st Century, both sides must reassess how they should deal and interact with the other. Both sides must recognize the simultaneous existence of conflicting and cooperative dimensions in superpower relations. Substantial differences of philosophy, strategic interests and standards of conduct are capable of propelling the superpowers toward mutual annihilation. The risk of conflict is made even more palpable by a balance of destructive capabilities which, if managed recklessly, further contribute to a condition of instability. "Each side should seek a stable equilibrium in which neither side sees the possibility of quick gain. In doing so, it must be recognized that trying to achieve this balance, at a level which neither side can afford, is within itself destabilizing."(64)

As the NATO nations look toward the 21st century, three objectives must dominate military force planning to ensure that stability through strength is achieved. First, NATO must continue to deter Soviet aggression. Second, the forces chosen

must contribute to crisis stability. Third, and no matter how far-fetched it may seem, should deterrence fail, NATO forces must be structured so that they add to the termination of conflict short of global destruction.(65) To accomplish these tasks the United States must reduce the vulnerabilities of its strategic retaliatory capabilities and its supporting command, control and communications; maintain a capacity for limited nuclear options; maintain modern, fully sustainable conventional air, land, and maritime forces; and continue, in conjunction with the Soviet Union, to vigorously pursue strategic stability through arms control across the spectrum of military capabilities.(66) In this context NATO's strategic forces must remain capable of retaliating decisively against the entire range of second strike assets held by the Soviet Union. This will remain the key to strategic deterrence and stability into the foreseeable future.(67)

In the nuclear age the Clausewitzian theory of the end-state takes on special significance and meaning. As Clausewitz stated, "the object of war, as of all creative activity, was the employment of the available means for the predetermined end."(68) Implicit in this dictum is that the end must be proportionate to the means. Such a rational calculus assumes great knowledge concerning the true balance of forces. A key component of that relationship of means to ends is risk. A

failure to consider rationally the factors of risk may lead a Soviet decision maker to misrepresent the true correlation of forces and lead his country to the brink of destruction. A question of primary importance then becomes how much risk is the Soviet Union willing to accept in pursuit of achieving a national goal? Colin Gray points out that "the most important strategic difference between the nuclear era and all previous eras in weaponry is that in the nuclear era a state (or society) can be defeated even if its armed forces are not." (69) The implications of this are fairly obvious. The United States and her allies must maintain sufficient strength that even in the face of minimal risk, the Soviet Union is forced to conclude that her defeat is ensured.

The preparedness of Soviet and Warsaw Pact strength requires that NATO keep sufficient nuclear and conventional forces in Western Europe. (70) "NATO must be able to counter any apparent threat in a manner that neither undermines the firmness of its own governments and peoples nor provoke a resort to force by others." (71) Reducing NATO's desperate dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons by providing for more robust and qualitatively superior conventional forces will decrease the danger of nuclear war, enhance the cohesion and resolve of the alliance in a crisis, and thus create a much more stable order of global security.

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