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PANDORA'S BOX: THE KEY TO CLOSE IT

CORE COURSE IV ESSAY

Lt Col Al Childers/Class of 95  
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CDR Paul Thompson

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**PANDORA'S BOX: THE KEY TO CLOSE IT**

Throughout the Cold War, U.S. policymakers viewed weapons of mass destruction (WMD)--nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons--in terms of a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. Specifically, nuclear weapons supported the strategy of "containment" which, with the collapse of communism, may no longer be relevant. In the absence of a new comprehensive strategic threat, U.S. policymakers have failed to reach consensus that the remaining direct threat to U.S. security is the increasing proliferation of WMD.

The "New World Order" that evolved in 1990 reflected a post-Cold War world which conceded that American power could lead a collective security arrangement to a more stable and secure international system. The U.S. and the world are on the verge of missing an opportunity to provide a coordinated political-military threat to put all forms of WMD back into Pandora's box.

The current national security strategy regarding the proliferation of WMD is contrary to declared national interests and to the U.S. goal of nonproliferation. This was particularly evident during the recent crisis concerning North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The purpose of this paper is to propose a new national security strategy concerning the proliferation of WMD.

**THE PROLIFERATION THREAT**

Implicit in U.S. national interests is that "we should ensure that the rule of law prevails, that the principle of collective defense secures the peace; and that armed aggression is condemned as an instrument of state policy " (Miller 10)

Despite international agreements to the contrary, nations are proliferating WMD and missile delivery systems at an alarming rate. Missile technology and hardware have spread among allies and foes throughout the Third World on all continents. India, Pakistan, and Israel are believed to possess nuclear weapons; ten states are thought to stockpile chemical weapons while four may have biological weapon reserves. Other nations are managing programs which could produce WMD in a short timespan. (Hahn: 20)

The wider proliferation of WMD will continue to reduce the likelihood of deterring WMD use in a conflict. Traditional U.S. instruments of statecraft will be less effective in protecting our interests. So, we must expect challenges by an adversary who possesses WMD and must be prepared to react rationally.

Many political-military writers have recognized the shift in the relative influence of nuclear weapons and the need to restructure the U.S. military for post-Cold War employment strategies. The difficulty in a bureaucracy is not in identifying a shift in the paradigm for U.S. security and stability; it is in discarding a strategy that "proved successful for 40 years...[and]...successfully deterred global war, contained a militarily powerful adversary, and projected presence for stability in regional hot spots...." (Miller: 6)

#### **ENGAGEMENT AND ENLARGEMENT**

The end of the Cold War and disintegration of the Soviet Union enticed President Clinton to adopt a national security strategy based on the new strategic environment. A National

Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement focuses on three objectives: enhancing U.S. security, promoting U.S. prosperity, and promoting democracy. To do this, the document notes that:

"Our leadership must stress preventive diplomacy--through such means as support for democracy, economic assistance, overseas military presence, military-to-military contacts and involvement in multilateral negotiations...in order to help resolve problems, reduce tensions and defuse conflicts before they become crises." (NSS: 5)

The strategy also recognizes that WMD "pose a major threat to our security and that of our allies and other friendly nations." (NSS: 11) The strategy for dealing with such threats resides in maintaining "robust strategic nuclear forces while seeking to implement [and broaden membership in] existing strategic arms agreements," (NSS: 11) the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), and technology controls. Also, the U.S. has relied on the diplomatic and economic elements of power through nonproliferation provisions in the Foreign Assistance Act, particularly the Symington, Pressler, Glenn, and Solarz amendments which cut off aid to countries that acquire or export nuclear materials, technology, and equipment not under international safeguards. At the same time, the strategy calls for maintaining a capability to deter through the threat of U.S. strategic nuclear force or to prevent the use of WMD through detection and disabling WMD, delivery systems, and their facilities.

In short, the national security strategy for nonproliferation of WMD under engagement and enlargement involves negotiating with countries who seek to procure or export WMD to halt their

activities, maintaining a large retaliatory nuclear force to deter threats to the U.S. and its allies from WMD-possessing nations, and developing a capability to prevent the use of WMD. It is complicated by a reduced U.S. force structure tasked to perform a diversified set of missions.

#### **THE NORTH KOREAN TEST**

In 1994, North Korea provided the first serious WMD proliferation challenge to the strategy of engagement and enlargement. Attempts to push the North Koreans to support their NPT commitments failed despite diplomatic, economic, and military overtures. U.S. policymakers admitted they possessed little leverage with North Korea. In an unfortunate signal to other nations that would proliferate, U.S. officials agreed to provide Western nuclear technologies in exchange for partial adherence to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections under the NPT. Not surprisingly, subsequent negotiations concerning North Korea's nuclear activities have uncovered further intransigence. U.S. negotiators still cannot be certain what North Korea's nuclear weapons program status is. Further, the U.S. demonstrated it could be "blackmailed" by a nation that acts counter to our professed national security interests.

#### **WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE STRATEGY?**

The current strategy is ineffective because it fails to focus on the root cause of proliferation--WMD have enormous political and military utility. In fact, the strategy may even provide increased relevance for the political utility of WMD.

The strategy affirms that the U.S. perceives utility in using WMD to secure national interests while denying the same capability to other nations. It fails to recognize existing global stockpiles of WMD--particularly among allies--and ignores the realpolitik that nations will do whatever is required for survival, to include subverting and ignoring international agreements.

At the same time, the strategy is myopic by focussing on current WMD proliferation issues without accounting for the changing dynamics of the international system during the next 20-25 years. The current strategy lowers the credibility of the U.S. in the eyes of other nations and hampers our ability to secure national security interests.

Current nonproliferation efforts have failed to deter nations from seeking and obtaining WMD. Evidenced by discoveries in Iraq and North Korea, the NPT and its safeguard system of IAEA inspections are easily circumvented. The inherent weakness in the U.S. nonproliferation regime is that it depends on the willingness of signatories to cooperate while advocating no comprehensive policy which deters them from threatening WMD use.

With the end of the Cold War and devolution of superpower competition, the international system will increasingly resist individual nation-state attempts to influence it. The U.S. is, therefore, faced with two choices: 1) continue attempts to control the international system or 2) adjust to changes in it. The choices are complicated because the U.S. strategy of nuclear deterrence stresses damage limitation and crisis stability in the

international system through nuclear strength and extended deterrence over potential war-making nations. (Ravenal: 32)

Earl Ravenal proposes adjusting to the evolving international system by "strategic disengagement"--removing U.S. regional military commitments, passive control of regional conflicts, and focusing on neutrality and accommodation. He views disengagement as the only means of reducing the probability of nuclear conflict for the U.S. in an increasingly chaotic world. However, his solution ignores another choice: the U.S. can attempt to control nuclear conflict by eliminating the utility of nuclear weapons from the system of deterrence and defense. (Ravenal: 72)

President Bush began using the United Nations to create a "New World Order" of peace and stability. The difficulty has been that the U.N. is traditionally viewed as an organization secondary to the sovereignty of the member nations. U.N. General Assembly and International Court of Justice attempts to enforce international commitments rely on members' willingness to voluntarily fulfill their obligations. However, disintegration of the Soviet Union has created an opportunity for the U.N. to more aggressively engage in national sovereignty issues.

General John Piotrowski, USAF (Ret.), points to three generally agreed countermeasures for dealing with the threatened use of WMD: deterrence through credible threatened retaliation, a preemptive strike on the offending WMD, or a comprehensive defensive shield against ballistic missiles. None are fail-safe. Deterrence assumes the U.S. is dealing with an adversary who also

believes in seeking a WMD-free resolution. Preemptive strikes and defensive shields rely on the U.S. developing complete knowledge of the adversary's WMD systems before their use and eliminating the systems without residual materials affecting innocent populations. (Hahn: 129)

Critics like Paul Nitze have argued that, through repeated threats of nuclear retaliation to defend national interests, U.S. national security policy could lose its credibility. The U.S. built huge nuclear arsenals to counter equally enormous Soviet arsenals. It is unlikely that the U.S. would use nuclear weapons against lesser threats. Leonard Moffitt correctly notes that:

"Power is only as meaningful as its potential to be exerted. Threats to use it are only as effective as others' willingness to believe them. Bluffing inevitably seems to get called, thus causing more damage to one's power position than would a strategic withdrawal designed to gain subsequent diplomatic, economic, or military utility. [Because of] the specter of 'nuclear winter'...perceptions of strategic leverage had to be dramatically adjusted." (Moffitt: 6-7; Nitze: 152)

A paradox has developed. In emphasizing the utility of nuclear weapons as a political and military deterrent, the U.S. undermined its flexibility to use other elements of military power more effectively. Meanwhile, nations noted the continued importance the U.S. placed on nuclear weapons and our obsession with other nations' WMD programs and proliferated accordingly.

#### **A NEW STRATEGY**

While the U.S. should not abandon diplomatic and economic efforts to prohibit WMD proliferation removing the myth that WMD has political and military utility must be the focus of a U.S.

nonproliferation strategy. The end of the Cold War has offered an opportunity to evolve deterrence of WMD use beyond the threat of nuclear destruction to a more believable scheme of high-technology, low-lethality rebuilding of rogue nations. The following policy options are proposed:

1) Recognize that, despite efforts to prevent proliferation of WMD, proliferation will occur simply because the U.S. has emphasized the utility of possessing WMD for the past 50 years.

2) Articulate a policy which deemphasizes the utility of WMD and develop a credible means to exact punishment for the use of WMD by any nation:

a) Declare that the U.S. renounces possession and use of WMD in a post-Cold War world, will adhere to a comprehensive test ban of WMD, and will eliminate all WMD consistent with actions of other WMD-possessing nations. WMD stockpiles will be eliminated as adversarial threats diminish and/or the U.S. develops capability to deter WMD threats by other means.

b) Negotiate a collective security agreement with the declared nuclear states of the U.N. Security Council--France, Britain, Russia, and China--that they will consider the use of WMD as an attack on the national sovereignty of all nations and that they will restructure the using nation's current government.

c) The means of punishment for WMD use should emphasize non-lethal technologies to destroy all war-making capability, government organizations, and infrastructure as necessary to disestablish the nation's government in its existing

form and rebuild it as a non-threatening state or even assimilate it into surrounding nations.

3) Install a missile defense system in phases which will protect the U.S. first from immediate threats (i.e., rogue nations with small arsenals) until global coverage can be completed. Provide temporary access of a missile defense system to other nations threatened by WMD-possessing nations.

4) Use the U.S. technological advantage to develop weapon systems which replace the utility of WMD and which can disrupt the infrastructure that supports war-making, information, finance, and transportation systems.

#### **ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PROPOSED NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION POLICY**

The first critique offered for the new policy is that members of the U.N. Security Council would not agree to participate in a "counter WMD force." It also assumes that the American people will support a commitment to use our armed forces to usurp a nation's sovereignty and restructure its leadership although U.S. vital interests are not directly attacked. There is perhaps no more likely period since 1945 that domestic and international support for such a force is more likely--it represents the moral high ground and is more realistic than "mutual assured destruction" or "massive retaliation." Further, the world looks to the U.S. for leadership, and the Chernobyl disaster heightened awareness of uncontrollable nuclear affects.

The key reason for developing reliance on nuclear weapons for 45 years was the defense of Europe through a North Atlantic

Treaty Organization that was "determined to avoid efforts to match the Soviets man for man, tank for tank...[which] would require high levels of defense expenditure..." (Garrity: 17) The Chinese turned to nuclear weapons to counter a Soviet nuclear and conventional threat. The Soviet threat as originally perceived no longer exists. The threat to all nations has shifted to rogue use of WMD to gain regional hegemony.

The new strategy recognizes the diplomatic and military influence of U.N. Security Council members, their commitment as responsible nuclear weapons possessing nations, and the critical importance of developing a consensus among them outside existing alliances and agreements. The strategy would not alienate the Chinese since it places no additional demands to refrain from proliferating WMD and ballistic missile technologies; it condemns the use of WMD. Also, the new strategy could allow Security Council members to participate only with moral and not necessarily military support.

A second critique is that current diplomatic and economic sanctions efficiently, effectively, and peacefully prohibit proliferation of WMD. Unfortunately, sufficient data exists that proves this argument false. The international system has evolved beyond current methods of control.

"So many divergent ethnic and religious blocs, so many national and multinational businesses and banks compete for resource attention and influence that the web of interrelated impacts and spinoffs from each action have greatly multiplied. This complexity... limits the possibilities that any one nation, no matter how powerful, can pull all the strings of political and economic interests concertedly even if that nation

could achieve a solid domestic consensus on international policy." (Moffitt: 9)

A third critique is that the policy would violate the sovereign rights of nations. A counter to this argument is that these nations have first violated the rights of other nations with their criminal use of indiscriminate weapons, thereby forfeiting their sovereign rights. Collective action against WMD users would benefit all nations by contributing to global and regional stability and promoting peace. The fear of WMD effects would serve as a powerful motivating force among peace-seeking nations. The goal of eliminating the threat of nuclear war should receive widespread international and domestic support.

The fourth critique is that the policy does not account for potential use of Israel's nuclear weapons for self defense. As Miller points out, serious deterrence demands credibility.

"What is required is to demonstrate resolution to protect one's interests and to establish credibility of one's determination to use force if necessary. ...Several factors seem to be required for persuasive diplomacy to be effective...clarity and consistency in the demand being imposed; the strength of the motivation propelling action by the coercing power; a basic asymmetry of motivation between the coercing power and the target nation; adequate domestic and international support; the targeted nation's fear of unacceptable escalation; and precise terms for settlement of the crisis." (Miller: 22-23)

The U.S. and Israel have successfully defended Israel's sovereignty with conventional forces for nearly 50 years. To provide a credible deterrence strategy, the U.S. must convince Israel and her adversaries that it will continue to support Israel's security. For the sake of U.S. and global stability, it

should be made clear that Israel may survive without using WMD but Israel will surely not survive if she does use WMD. Each U.N. Security Council member would be responsible for influencing its allies not to resort to WMD use through threat of alienation and dissolution.

## CONCLUSION

The end of the Cold War sharply diminished the utility of U.S. nuclear weapons. A perceived overwhelming Soviet conventional and nuclear threat no longer exists. Meanwhile, Third World nations are attempting to increase their regional and global power ranking through the utility of WMD as exemplified by the U.S. for the past 50 years.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons is the most serious threat to U.S. national security. It is a threat which will increase commensurate with increased availability of WMD materials and technology so long as nations perceive political and military utility in possessing WMD.

A new national security strategy must obviate the political and military utility of WMD. The U.S. must recognize that each nation has a sovereign right to possess WMD if it desires but the U.S. must take the lead in declaring and demonstrating that it no longer recognizes utility in possessing WMD and that, in conjunction with Security Council members, it will use all elements of power to ensure that no government which uses WMD will survive in its current form.

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