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8 April 1966

AN EXAMINATION: PREEMPTION AS A U.S. MILITARY STRATEGY

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An Examination: Preemption as a U. S. Military Strategy

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8 April 1966

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SUMMARY

The first serious thought by the United States towards a strategy of preemption appeared soon after the close of World War II. The issue became the core of a volatile controversy that ensued throughout the 1950's. The subject was finally discarded when the proponents were unable to counter the argument that preemption and preventive war are identical.

This thesis attempts to establish and illuminate the relationship between a preemptive attack strategy and our stated policy of deterrence. Deterrence and preemption are described as being identical in both character and objective. Preemption is further viewed as a necessary measure towards strengthening our deterrent policy.

The compelling reasons for examining preemption are determined to be the continuing Soviet nuclear threat, and the quantum leaps in weapon technology. Particular emphasis is placed upon acquiring indisputable evidence of attack by means of earth orbiting reconnaissance vehicles.

The arguments both in support and rejection of preemption are illuminated. The cultural resistance of the American people to a policy of ever striking first is identified as the overriding objection. This paper contends, however, that if the self-defense aspects of preemption were clearly understood, the American conscience would not reject the strategy. This thesis attempts to rebut the contention that preemption is unthinkable because this nation has an invulnerable "second strike force." The attitudes of the British and French are briefly examined. The purpose is to determine what reaction could be expected if a U.S. study of preemption were undertaken.

This inquiry provides limited observation, but does indicate that the British would support the strategy. Speculation as to the French attitude revolves mainly around the detached approach assumed by President Charles de Gaulle.

There is growing evidence that the United States will soon achieve the capability to better detect the enemy's preparations and intent to attack. This and the obligation to assure this nation maximum security under all conditions is the basis upon which this paper recommends a U.S. study of preemption as an element of military strategy.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to revive an old issue, examine the subject and determine if that issue should be considered in strategic thought. The issue is preemption.¹ It is certainly not a unique or new thought. Less than twenty years ago, American strategists began to give serious consideration to the subject. The interest in studying preemptive attack, during that period, could be compared to a pendulum motion. There was an

¹(At the outset of this thesis it is appropriate to add a brief discussion of the term preemption. This paper will refer to preemption and preemptive attack as synonymous terms. Many of the quotations cited in this thesis will also use the terms interchangeably; it is important to note that the Dictionary of United States Army Terms states that the term "preemptive war" is not to be used. The term of interest to the Department of Defense and approved for use in general joint service interest is preemptive attack. The definition is: "An attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent.") See US Dept of the Army, Army Regulations 320-5: Dictionary of United States Army Terms, p. 308. (It may be of interest to note that the original Latin "praevenire" is "to come before" or "go before" in "space of time.") See Alfred Vagts, Defense and Diplomacy, p. 335. (A clear definition that provides the reader the major difference between the term preventive war and preemptive attack is, "This they say [preemptive attack] is not the same as preventive war where one nation initiates a war - when it considers that war is inevitable - to prevent its enemy from gaining the advantage of choosing its own time and place for the beginning of hostilities. The main difference appears to be one of timing. A preventive war might be launched months in advance of a threatened attack while a preemptive attack or 'strike' would be made hours or even minutes before the actual launching of a hostile strike by an enemy.") See House Document No. 207, United States Defense Policies in 1960, 26 May 1961, pp. 18-19.

upswing of interest followed by a sudden and rapid downswing. The pendulum came to rest about five years ago and has remained so since that time.

The first question that could strike the reader is "why revive the issue?" Unquestionably, a preemptive attack is contrary to long standing national policy. This paper attempts an answer by stating that the policy of this nation of never going first in a nuclear attack may not be the policy that assures maximum security. Further, the problems the United States faces today are indeed staggering. The threat to American security grows at an ever increasing rate. All who are vitally concerned with keeping this nation as secure as humanly possible are continuing to mobilize every facet of thinking in support of this all consuming objective. Perhaps then the real objective of the paper is to stimulate some thinking in this area whether or not the strategy of preemptive attack is accepted or rejected by the reviewer. The usefulness of the examination becomes better defined if the author can achieve, even partially, that objective.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis is based on the premise that although the policy of deterrence and the related nuclear strategy have been studied in exacting detail for over 15 years, there exists a gap. The gap appears to take the form of a question that seems to be escaping an answer. "What is the relationship of strategy to deterrence,

should deterrence fail?" To attempt to answer this, an examination of the strategy of preemptive attack was examined. Unquestionably there are innumerable other avenues of approach. Preemption, however, is a highly controversial subject and thus cannot help but immediately evoke a response, whether it emanates from one who supports the theory or is unalterably opposed to the concept. Rather than avoiding such controversy, this examination sought it out. It is believed that in no other way could this examination begin to probe into the heart of the matter. The proponents have voiced their approval in unobscured phrases. Those who have rejected the thought of preemption have been no less emphatic in their opposition. The core of the controversy was, at the outset of this inquiry, readily identified. If some of the more glaring arguments both for and against preemption can be illuminated, then perhaps this paper can meet the objectives of this examination. The goal of this thesis might be seen as one that permits both the pros and cons of preemption to be focused upon to determine if the strategy² is desirable or completely objectionable to this nation.

²("Strategy is the art of infusing into a plan and/or applying a central idea, design or timing which will give the greatest possible advantage in a campaign or situation. The strategy is the specific design used.") See Alfred R. Maxwell, USAF, "The Word Strategy," Air University Quarterly Review, Vol. 8, Spring 1954, p. 74.

SCOPE

This paper will address the stated policy of accepting the first blow in a nuclear attack. An inquiry will be made into the possibility of altering the United States position for the singular purpose of increasing the strength of our deterrent policy. Deterrence will be then focused upon to investigate some of the realities of this policy that might require a substantive and new measure of strength.

The central theme of this treatment of deterrence will be that of establishing the character of the policy and the relationship to the character of the strategy of preemptive attack. If the relationship is considered to be a valid one, then a logical inquiry can be made into some reasons for considering the strategy in light of technological developments that could possibly require a reassessment of our current strategic thought. More precisely, the precarious equilibrium in the balance of power between the United States and the Soviets could change drastically. The uncertainties of the future will require a continual and constant review of the strategy that is geared to employ United States nuclear power. This paper briefly examines only one element of the technological future; a glimpse of the uncertainties posed by military systems in space.

The concluding chapter will view some of the polemics that could perhaps be encountered if preemption were seriously studied as an element of military strategy. The intent is to indicate the

principal feature of both the case for and against preemption. The contention will be that the generally accepted reasons for rejecting preemption require a searching reexamination as to their validity in the thermonuclear age. In effect, the inquiry into the polemics of preemption is merely a probe to provide some clues as to the response by and attitudes of certain elements within the American public and government.

The examination begins by returning to the same note upon which this introductory began. The issue of preemption is not new, but a brief review of the background of this subject will perhaps provide the reader some frame of reference for the remainder of the inquiry.

CHAPTER 2

THE PENDULUM OF PREEMPTION

THE AWAKENING

Aggressive war is no stranger to American policy. Since the birth of our nation we have at times waged aggressive war. Our history does not indicate however that the issue of preventive war was ever confronted.¹ It has been suggested that the United States avoided such a confrontation because of political isolation. In fact, although the Cold War actually began in the 1920's, American leaders failed to recognize the Soviet intransigence until we were immersed in World War II. This delayed reaction is somewhat understandable in light of the inescapable fact that the United States was not an active participant in the world community. Equally important, America played only a minor role in the settlement of conflicts.² The close of World War II, however, marked the beginning of a totally new and markedly changed U.S. attitude toward international conflict and the role America must

¹Samuel P. Huntington, "To Choose Peace or War," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 83, Apr. 1957, pp. 363-366. (In Bismark's Memoirs he states that, "The specific nature of 'Preventive war' consists in choosing the time and in taking the initiative in starting a war which has previously been made probable by political relations between the opposing states.") See N. Talensky, "Soviet Society For the Popularization of Political and Scientific Knowledge," International Affairs, 9 Sep. 1962, p. 10.

²Paul C. Davis, "The Cold War: Origins and Developments," in Peace and War in the Modern Age, ed. by Frank R. Barnett, and others, pp. 37-38.

necessarily now assume. The United States recognized that the nation had to accept active leadership in the determination, resolve and drive to contain the Soviet Union. Reality now had to be faced. The United States simply could no longer ignore the problem of assessing military strategies in the new light of a totally changed international power position. It was now recognized by the U.S. strategists that this power, or balance of power, was no longer an assured factor with an overwhelming advantage to the United States. The growing military strength of the Soviet Bloc, coupled with the threat of the Soviets capturing Western Europe, ceased being illusionary.³ This threat dictated a response.

THE RESPONSE

From mid-1945 to July 1946 the United States responded to the more flagrant Soviet violations of wartime agreements by diplomatic measures. No major readjustment of its wartime policies toward the Communists had been attempted. Military responsibilities were not to be accepted by the United States until almost a year later.⁴ A response by a few military strategists however did occur. Perhaps one of the first to define this response was the Deputy Commander of the United States Army Air Forces, Lieutenant General Ira Eaker. In 1946 General Eaker led off the controversy

³Ibid., p. 41.

⁴Ibid., pp. 40-41.

that was to grow to unimagined dimensions for the next 10 years by saying, "If we are to prevent the launching of atom bombs, guided missiles or super rockets against our industrial establishment we must have a force ready to destroy these weapons at their source before they are launched."⁵

This and similar statements introduced the American public to military doctrine that heretofore, if considered by strategists, was never disclosed or discussed in open forum.

THE CONTROVERSIAL CONCEPT

One need not speculate why these concepts were at the very least controversial. The espoused doctrine contained two elements:

a. The exploitation of the United States monopoly of nuclear weapons. Upon this totally recognized basis, the United States could then present an ultimatum to the Soviets.

b. Force an immediate showdown between the Soviets and the United States to prevent further dissipation of American strength through a series of small wars with Soviet satellites.

Authentic as the doctrines were, they were clearly and unmistakably preventive war in purpose, scope and character. They thus

⁵Ira Eaker, "Eaker Sets 4 Lines for Preparedness," New York Times, 21 Nov. 1946, p. 10.

were unacceptable to the American public. The nation was unable to regard war as the only alternative.⁶

The heat of the debate rose markedly. Hanson Baldwin called the theory: ". . . a doctrine of desperation, frustration and negation."⁷ He further added, "the whole concept of preventive war is immoral, self-defeating and utterly fallacious."⁸

THE ROOTS OF PREEMPTION:⁹ THE UPSWING

Contrasted to the earlier preventive war doctrines, the theory of "anticipatory retaliation" was first expounded as a future contingency. This was the introduction of the first preemptive talk into the overall issue. Again, unlike the earlier doctrines, the follow on theory was developed and articulated by military officers principally in the Air Force. Instead of the defensive-offensive strategy which had been the traditional basis of strategy in the United States, the supporters of "anticipatory retaliation" argued that in the event of an imminent attack we should undertake an offensive-defensive action.¹⁰ The cardinal

⁶Huntington, op. cit., p. 363. (The purpose of preventive war is the preservation of the status quo.)

⁷Hanson Baldwin, Editorial, New York Times, 1 Sep. 1950, p. 4.

⁸Ibid.

⁹William M. Stringer, "Preemptive War - What is it?" Christian Science Monitor, 26 May 1960. (Definition: "Preemptive war means that you seize the initiative and attack first. If the United States should discover through its intelligence source that country X was preparing to attack it, that attack was imminent - then the United States should attack first.")

¹⁰Huntington, op. cit., pp. 365-266.

issue raised by advocates of this theory was that the preemptive action described was completely disassociated from earlier preventive war doctrine. Robert Tucker's definition of preemption appears to best explain this concept as he states:

If an adversary has already initiated hostilities it no longer remains possible to prevent or pre-empt him in use of force, but one may still pre-empt the enemy in taking certain measures and notably in pre-empting him in the strategic employment of nuclear weapons.¹¹

In a crisis situation, they argued, preventive action would be justified if it were certain that: (a) a surprise Soviet attack would cripple our retaliatory force. The Gaither Committee's report would add credence to this argument as one of the principal findings was, "The Soviet Union could by late 1959, possibly launch an attack against the United States with 100 inter-continental ballistic missiles carrying megaton nuclear warheads; and the planes in our Strategic Air Command (SAC) except for a small fraction of them on 'alert status' would be vulnerable."¹² (b) the USSR was indeed intending to make such an attack, and (c) the attack was imminent. Given these conditions, it was further argued, no alternatives would exist. Nuclear war between

¹¹Robert W. Tucker, The Just War, p. 143. (Tucker sees preemptive attack as "indicating the first strategic use of nuclear weapons.")

¹²(The Committee was established by President Eisenhower in April of 1957. The chairman was Robert C. Sprague who replaced Mr. Rowan Gaither upon his illness. The committee was originally organized to investigate the "relative value of the various active and passive measures to protect the civil population in case of nuclear attack." It finally included an examination of the deterrent value of our retaliatory forces. The report is Classified.) See Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace 1956-1961, p. 220.

the United States and the Soviet Union was now a stark and terrifying reality. Thus, the supporters contended, the consequences of not striking the first blow would be of infinitely greater magnitude than bearing the onus of being the initiator of World War III and nuclear devastation.

The proponents of this theory sought to completely disassociate their concepts from earlier discussions that were framed in a context of preventive war doctrine. They established as a basic tenet that preemptive attack was not required in the immediate future but that the United States must be prepared militarily, politically and psychologically to forestall the rapid destruction of its military security. It was regarded as a realistic effort to prepare for a contingency which might well arise and in which preventive action might well be required. Basic to the "anticipatory retaliation" theory was the assumption that no real defense was possible against a nuclear attack. The counterargument was direct and unencumbered. It was: atomic plenty has put an end to the decisiveness of surprise atomic attack.¹³

THE FOCUS UPON PREEMPTION AS A REALITY

Although far from agreement as to the United States adopting a strategy of preemption, the controversy did focus upon the

¹³Huntington, op. cit., pp. 364-365.

reality that this nation could be devastated by a nuclear attack. For the first time (1957), American strategists began to take seriously the possibility of a successful preemptive first strike. A number of articles and treatises began to appear which served to fan the flames of the debate. Emphasis was always upon the effects of a Soviet surprise nuclear attack and the steps the U.S. should take to meet this threat.¹⁴ A book appeared about this time that became a pivotal point in the revolving controversy. A review of the research material available, in this particular area of interest would indicate that the following passages represent the archetype of expressions that supported a U.S. preemptive strategy.

In order to make atomic retaliation effective as a deterrent to aggression, we must decide now and prepare to strike first whenever we have positive evidence that an attack is mounted against the United States. Such a policy does not contemplate a preventive war or a sneak attack. We would only strike if the prospective enemy did not cease preparing to attack us or our allies by a certain time.

It is not too soon for the United States Senate to resolve that never again shall American Armed Forces be ordered to allow an enemy the first blow.¹⁵

David Lawrence added his clear support to the preemptive doctrine when he said, "the preemptive war doctrine now should also be adopted by the United States in its own defense. This is

¹⁴Morton H. Halperin, Limited War in the Nuclear Age, p. 13.

¹⁵William D. Puleston, The Influence of Force in Foreign Relations, p. 128.

perhaps the best way to prevent war from ever happening."¹⁶ He and other writers repeated the argument that the United States had the same right to apply the "doctrine of preemptive force that our adversaries do."¹⁷ The public now joined in the debate as evidenced from the growing number of questions aimed at the President and the Defense Department.

In 1958, to a question about the consequences of an "all out first blow nuclear war" President Eisenhower said he did not agree that this country "would have to take the first blow," adding "wars have a way of coming about in circumstances that have not been foreseen by humans."¹⁸ Most importantly, the President addressed the question of the advantages of a first strike when he said,

. . . always we must be alert and I think it is silly to say we can be defeated in a first-blow attack for the simple reason that we have so much strength retaliatory strength that any nation foolish to resort to that kind of an effort that is the exchange of nuclear attacks would itself be destroyed. There is no question in my mind.¹⁹

This statement could have resulted in creating confusion in the American public's mind. Did the President now accept the preemptive strategy? Would America strike a first blow in a nuclear war?

¹⁶David Lawrence, U.S. News and World Report, 16 Mar. 1959, p. 120.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Dwight D. Eisenhower, Public Papers of the Presidents, 1958, p. 640.

¹⁹Ibid.

SOME EARLY ANSWERS TO PREEMPTION

Secretary of Defense, Neil H. McElroy was quizzed at length and finally some seven months following the President's statement, the Secretary said in sole reference to a policy of preemption, "because we are not aggressive this policy could be [sic] advantage to a potential attacker. Our policy is that we will not attack first."²⁰

Later in 1959 President Eisenhower added this to his views on the U.S. striking the first blow in a nuclear war ". . . no, if we know we are at any moment under threat of attack as would be evidenced by missiles or planes coming in our direction then we have to act just as rapidly as possible, humanly possible to defend ourselves."²¹ This was one point of view, admittedly a significant one buttressed by the unmatched importance of the highest office in the land. Nevertheless, the family of controversy and strongly held convictions regarding the necessity for a U.S. preemptive strategy can readily be recognized as we hear the same Mr. Robert Sprague who was appointed by President Eisenhower say,

If we have strategic intelligence that the Russians are planning a strike against us then we certainly should make the first strike. Now with enormous power of nuclear weapons and ability to deliver them over long distances if we suffer the first strike this would wipe out a very large percentage of our

²⁰US Congress, House, Hearings Before Committee on Science and Astronautics, p. 424.

²¹Dwight D. Eisenhower, Public Papers of the Presidents, 1959, p. 228.

military capability, and in this position we do not have the superior power position. If war appears to be imminent and Russia for example for her own reasons isn't making the progress of peaceful means that she wants to make, and decides on military means, in that event it is absolutely essential we strike first if we possibly can.²²

STARTING THE DOWNSWING OF PREEMPTION

At the end of the 1950's the American policy of deterrence was firmly established. Perhaps more than any other single feature that characterizes the philosophy of deterrence is the enormous cultural resistance of the American people of hitting first in a period of threatened war.

Dr. Edward Teller assured the Kremlin of America's determination never to initiate the first blow when in 1962 he said, "No matter how often the United States sends strongly worded

²²George E. Lowe, The Age of Deterrence, p. 203, citing television discussion by Robert Sprague, 24 May 1960. (The reader should take note that this obvious conflicting view between the President and the committee chairman was of special interest to the author of this thesis. Despite intensive research on this particular point no material was found that indicated President Eisenhower's view on Mr. Sprague's comment. In Waging Peace, the former President adds a significant statement which could or could not be interpreted as support of the Sprague statement. It is not the intent of this writer to draw any conclusion but the statement does reflect the opinion of President Eisenhower of the usefulness of the committee: "In the final result the Gaither Report was useful; it acted as a gadfly on any administration given to complacency and it listed a number of facts and opinions that provide a checklist for searching examination." p. 223.)

diplomatic notes, Russia knows that we will not launch the first nuclear attack."²³

American fears in respect to launching a first blow were not, even at this time, completely allayed by such assurances. The Federation of American Scientists, headed by Freeman J. Tyson stated that the Federation, composed of over 2500 scientists, was not convinced that the United States has not clearly accepted a "no first strike policy."²⁴ As if in answer to this and other expressed fears that America had not disavowed preemption, President Kennedy, in the commencement address delivered at the American University, June 10, 1963, said, "The United States as the world knows will never start war."²⁵

Later when President Kennedy said, "Our arms will never be used to strike the first blow in any attack,"²⁶ a crystal clear

²³Edward Teller with Allen Brown, The Legacy of Hiroshima, p. 234.

²⁴"U.S. Urged to State First Strike Disavowal," Washington Post, 24 Feb. 1963, p. A16.

²⁵John F. Kennedy, US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Toward a Strategy of Peace, 1961, Pub. 17, Jun. 1963.

²⁶US Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriation Bill 1961, pp. 1-2. (From all the resources available to this writer it can be concluded that the policy of the U.S. accepting the enemy's nuclear attack is not only declaratory but is unquestionably an action policy. As just one example of this total acceptance, such established authorities in the field of U.S. strategic thought as Stefan T. Posony, Richard B. Foster, Bernard Brodie, Alvin J. Cottrell, Herman Khan, William R. Kittner and Robert Strausz-Hupe subscribe to the statement, "The United States has foregone the option of striking first.") See Robert Strausz-Hupe, A Forward Strategy for America, p. 132.

doctrine emerged. The doctrine is; in the area of general war, the U.S. military capability must rest with that portion of forces that can survive the initial attack.²⁷ U.S. nuclear strategy, therefore, is clearly defensive. The defensive character of our nuclear strategy is not a debatable point. The clear and unequivocal statements by the U.S. regarding this doctrine are voluminous. Thus far the genesis of preemption has been examined and the rise and fall of U.S. interest in disavowing the policy of always accepting the enemy's first nuclear blow. Preemption has been rejected.²⁸ We note that the basis for rejection is unmistakably one that views preemption as either: a preventive war concept where the U.S. can be considered nothing less than an aggressor and initiator of World War III, or purely a concept that in no way is related to deterrence, nuclear strategy, or self defense. The opponents of preemption term the strategy offensive in action, purpose and character. Therefore, the strategy runs contrary to American ideals, cultural values and sensitivities.

This paper will proceed to inquire further into the United States policy of deterrence and the relationship to preemption. If such a relationship exists, that is, if both preemption and deterrence could be shown to be defensive in character, the

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Bernard A. Brodie, "The Anatomy of Deterrence," World Politics, p. 174. (To Bernard Brodie, the idea of the U.S. initiating a nuclear attack is unlikely and he adds that this rejection "has committed us completely and inevitably to the policy and strategy of deterrence.")

consideration of not always accepting the first enemy nuclear attack may hold some merit.

A conclusion can be drawn at this juncture. Earlier attempts to relate strategic thought to preemption were to be of no avail. The theories surrounding preemption were, in general, viewed as purely a distinct form of preventive war.

CHAPTER 3

THE RELATIONSHIP OF DETERRENCE TO PREEMPTION

THE DEFENSIVE CHARACTER OF DETERRENCE

From former President Eisenhower comes the unmistakable defensive nature of the United States policy of deterrence. He stated before the United Nations General Assembly, in September 1960, that:

The United States wants the Soviet Union and all the nations of the world to know enough about the U.S. defense preparations to be assured that U.S. forces exist only for deterrence and defense . . . not for surprise attack.¹

The President had earlier in the year declared explicitly the defensive nature of American security policies when he said, "America possesses an enormous defense power . . . but I once again assure all peoples and all nations that the United States, except in defense, will never turn loose this destructive power."² Earlier former Deputy Secretary of Defense Douglas defined deterrence for a congressional group by saying, "Our strategy of deterrence is simply the strategy of remaining so strong that no possible aggressor could see profit in aggression against us, or against our allies."³

¹Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Address to the United Nations General Assembly," Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 43, 10 Oct. 1960, p. 555.

²US Congress, House, United States Defense Policies in 1960, p. 19.

³Ibid., p. 14.

Could a United States preemptive attack be a surprise attack or a part of the defense to which the President alluded?

This paper submits that a preemptive attack strategy is wholly justifiable as a necessary measure of self-defense. Undoubtedly this marks a departure from the rigid confines of defense doctrines. Further, the United States would be enmeshed in the same difficulties found in justifying any preventive use of force. The price this nation would have to pay if it were to remain within those confines is unacceptably high.

Robert Tucker further adds to this consideration by stating:

In denying to nations the instrument of force without providing an effective alternative for insuring their security and independence, restrictive doctrines of self-defense may represent neither a contribution to the requirements of order nor a fulfillment of the demands of justice.⁴

Of overwhelming importance is the inescapable fact that deterrence, above all other considerations, must remain effective. To this author no other feature so describes what the criteria for deterrence should be. But the effectiveness of our policy has been questioned, indeed a sincere anxiety has been forcefully expressed.

In 1961, Senator Margaret Chase Smith from the floor of the United States Senate said:

Why, one may well ask is our deterrence not more effective. What is the reason it is not? The reason is that deterrence is not a matter of forces and firepower alone. The restraints and influence are projected from the capability to accomplish a

⁴Robert Tucker, The Just War, p. 146.

purpose; not just from what we have but from what we will do.⁵

In this same address to the Senate, she added the principal reality of deterrence, "Deterrence cannot be regarded as an assured fact. It is a sensitive condition, always subject to proof."⁶

Senator Smith was saying in effect that our deterrent lacked credibility. The United States is indicating to the Soviets that we are unwilling to use nuclear weapons against him. Intentions are the mainspring of our deterrent policy. Deterrence is interpreting intentions. Contrary to military traditions where the focus is always upon capabilities, deterrence is concerned with influencing and manipulating our intentions and communicating them to the potential enemy. As Thomas C. Schelling has said "What else is deterrence about?"⁷

SOME REALITIES AND PARADOXES OF DETERRENCE

Deterrence is a matter of sheer character. You have to prove that you will do what you say. It is a matter of resolve. It is not relevant that what you may do may hurt you, what is relevant is that it will hurt the enemy. The Soviets have the

⁵Margaret Chase Smith, "Statement of Senator Margaret Chase Smith," Congressional Record, daily edition, 21 Sep. 1961, pp. 19384-19388.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Thomas C. Schelling, "Deterrence: Military Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age," The Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol. 39, Autumn 1963, p. 535.

same deterrence problem as the United States. For some reason they seem to be doing a better job. Few Americans question whether or not Russia would respond to an attack on China. There are doubts to America using the full force of this nation's power against the Soviets if the USSR should attack Western Europe.

It is a stark reality that the requirements for deterrence are stringent. Deterrence is the product of sustained and intelligent effort and hard choices. These choices may run counter to basic realities and interests. Indeed the requirements for deterrence in the area of political and psychological consequences may be viewed by many Americans as totally unacceptable. Unquestionably there are paradoxes. One has already been mentioned. If the enemy can be made to believe that you will hurt him, it may not make a critical difference how much it will hurt you. A second paradox emerges when a hard choice is made to convince the enemy that the U.S. may not be fully rational, coolheaded and in control of oneself in periods of great tension. Deterrence is not a question of what one prefers to do, but what one will do. This is a patent case of intent. The focus is upon communicating this intent to the would-be aggressor.⁸

Our intentions were communicated with all of the authority at our command, when during the Cuban Missile crisis, President Kennedy said:

⁸Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 37, Jan. 1959, pp. 211-212.

It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack on the United States requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.⁹

The first missile from Cuba landing upon American soil would mark the failure of deterrence. This is uncontested. This paper submits that deterrence fails before that action occurs. Deterrence fails when the U.S. receives clear, unequivocal knowledge that the enemy is in the act of launching an immediate attack upon the United States.

Some American strategists have suggested that the greatest failure of deterrence was precisely the Cuban Crisis of October 1962.¹⁰ This view may not be fully supported; however, this thesis postulates that if Cuban missiles were about to be fired at the U.S. we would have no strategy related to that precise failure of deterrence. Rather the strategy would be one of retaliation which is not related to deterrence. Retaliation is doing nothing of a counteroffensive nature unless and until the enemy has struck.¹¹

The Cuban crisis served to focus attention upon questions of fundamental importance to the United States. Chief among the

⁹John F. Kennedy, Public Papers of the Presidents, 1962, p. 485.

¹⁰Bernard Brodie, "The McNamara Phenomenon," World Politics, Vol. 17, Jul. 1965, p. 683.

¹¹Joel David Singer, Deterrence, Arms Control and Disarmament, p. 74.

queries could be that aimed at restraint upon the nuclear power of the United States.

That the U. S. was conducting an intensive air reconnaissance of Cuba was a well publicized fact. It would appear as a valid assumption that the imminence of an attack upon our shores could be detected. The central issue is that we would, by stated policy, await a nuclear attack. The thought begins to emerge that the policy of awaiting the devastating blow is at the very least, questionable, in terms of providing maximum security to this nation.

The Soviets backed down during the Cuban crisis. There is much evidence to support the contention that American nuclear power was the major force in causing their withdrawal.¹² The attempt to challenge our security could occur again. It seems unreasonable for this nation to confront such risks with the flexibility of that nuclear power greatly restricted. The restraint imposed upon U.S. power by always accepting the enemy's blow completely negates the flexibility so urgently required in conditions where our very existence may hang in balance.

A flexible approach to each situation where the nuclear deterrent operates, and where nuclear weapons may, in a crisis, be employed, is the approach most likely to result in maximum security.

¹²Brodie, op. cit., p. 684. (McNamara believed nuclear power was key to Khrushchev backing down.)

It has been observed that President Kennedy minced no words when he told the Soviet Union that the United States would retaliate to any nuclear attack from Cuba. This same forcefulness and resoluteness could likewise be attached to a declaration that this nation will not under any and all circumstances fore swear defending ourselves against an aggressive attack.¹³

It is contended that if the doctrine of not accepting the enemy's nuclear strike could be clearly communicated to the potential aggressor it would strengthen our deterrent. Conversely, if the enemy is led to think, by our failure to state our intentions, that he can prepare for war and plan to launch nuclear weapons at us at will and at places of his choosing, the strategy of deterrence has failed. Outward evidence of an unwillingness or a reluctance to carry out a threat inherent in American nuclear strategy will nullify a deterrent strategy faster than anything else.¹⁴

¹³(Khrushchev learned from Cuba that the U.S. would not strike first. When confronted by a threat of nuclear destruction from Soviet missiles in Cuba, U.S. leadership did not threaten the first use of strategic nuclear weapons against the U.S.S.R., President Kennedy, however, did warn Moscow that the U.S. would regard a Communist first strike . . . retaliate /U.S./ against the Soviet Union.) See Chester C. Ward, "Old Myths and New Realities," Orbis, Vol. 8, Summer 1964, p. 275.

¹⁴(Professor Kissinger alludes to the threat of U.S.S.R. "blackmail." He cites the threatened use of Soviet nuclear weapons against London and Paris /Suez Crisis/. "The side which is willing to run greater risks . . . gains psychological advantage.") See Henry A. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy, p. 48.

With regard to stating U.S. intentions to adopt preemption, former United States Air Force Chief of Staff, General Thomas D. White, while appearing before a Senate Subcommittee in 1965, made some illuminating remarks:

I certainly do think we might state it is our intention never to strike the first blow but I would be very certain as a human being alive in this country that if I were real sure that we were going to be hit tomorrow I wouldn't wait until we got hit. I would sure hit back right away and I would hope that is what would happen.¹⁵

A report of the U.S. House of Representatives appropriations committee endorsed the idea of preemptive attack in the following terms:

In the final analysis, to effectively deter a would be aggressor, we should maintain our armed forces in such a way and with such an understanding that should it ever become obvious that an attack upon us or our allies is imminent, we can launch an attack before the aggressor has hit either us or our allies. This is an element of deterrence /underlining added/ which the United States should not deny itself. No other form of deterrence can be fully relied upon.¹⁶

THE DEFENSIVE CHARACTER OF PREEMPTION

The House Appropriations Committee is in direct conflict with the prevailing policy that America must suffer the first blow to justify counterwarfare. The committee endorsed the contention

¹⁵Thomas D. White, Statement in Hearings Before the Subcommittee on National Security and International Operations of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, 16 Jun. 1965.

¹⁶US Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriation Bill 1961, p. 8.

that the United States should not deny itself the essential element of defense. The justification for maintaining the capability for the United States to use preemption in appropriate circumstances is closely related to the justification given to the strategy of deterrence. The relationship between deterrence and the strategy of preemption is one of identity of intent and character. They are both defensive.¹⁷

It is not intended to predict the future, however, some attempt in illuminating possibilities that could influence strategic thought toward a study of preemption appears to be a logical step. The objectives and thought patterns of the military strategist can change with time. There is a wide range of uncertainty with that of the enemy.

In the introduction to this paper the intent to revive the issue of preemption was made known. Some of the compelling reasons to inquire into preemption as an element of military strategy will now be examined.

¹⁷Tucker, op. cit., p. 142. (This does not mean to convey the idea that preemption and deterrence are identical in every respect. One is a psychological consideration, the other military. Paul M. Nitze assists the author in this by stating "it /deterrence/ is a policy based upon psychological grounds rather than military. There is a radical difference between the two.") See Paul M. Nitze, "Power and Policy. Problems in the Defense of the West," Asilomar National Strategy Seminar Proceedings, 1960, pp. 1, 6.

CHAPTER 4

THE REVIVAL OF PREEMPTION: SOME COMPELLING REASONS

THE TWO FACTORS OF MILITARY POWER BALANCE

If, for purposes of this inquiry, we accept the hypothesis that a very stable equilibrium of power exists between the United States and the Soviet Union, then this balance should be given some close examination.

The concept of a military balance consists of two factors. The first is the relative war winning capability with respect to the other side. Thus, if the forces are considered in balance, we have a military standoff. The second factor is the balanced deterrent posture of both sides. This means that the cost to either side in respect to the value of the objective to be attained is just simply too great. The first concept is tied to defense where the second is linked to deterrence.¹

If one side acquired a clear capacity to strike first, the so-called stable equilibrium vanishes. It does not appear to be unreasonable to indicate that the Soviets do not even need a qualitative or quantitative advantage over us to tempt them to strike. As Senator Henry M. Jackson has said: "The fellow who intends to strike the first blow would not need as much in the way

¹Carl H. Amme, Jr., "Arms Control Concepts and the Military Balance in Europe," Orbis, Vol. 8, Winter 1965, p. 848.

of military hardware in this atomic age as the fellow who is not going to respond until attacked."² The Senator made it clear that the United States is that "fellow" when he stated, "we are not apt to be the one that would strike the first blow."³

As Max Lerner has described it:

This decision might be made even by the leaders of a nation who know they are at a weapons disadvantage but who feel their relative armed strength or world political position slipping, further see no prospect of the tide turning and count on the element of surprise to equalize their disadvantage.⁴

Additionally, the military concept can be viewed in the light that changes in military technology whether unilateral or bilateral may convert a nuclear stalemate into a dynamically, unstable situation with either or both sides suddenly acquiring or expecting the acquisition of overwhelming ability to strike first.⁵ Military technology may turn out to be capable of creating breakthroughs that would make a difference so great that any attempt to realign the balance of power could not succeed. Once in possession of that breakthrough, the Soviets could conceivably consider surprise nuclear attack upon the United States. Roberta Wohlstetter

²US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, p. 85.

³Ibid.

⁴Max Lerner, The Age of Overkill: A Preface to World Politics, p. 46. (Any weakness can tempt attack, "the aggressor could skip a family of weapons and concentrate on a new development. The Russians dropped long range bombers and went to missiles.") See Henry A. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, pp. 25-25.

⁵A. L. Burns, "A New Balance of Power," Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 14, 1960, p. 67.

convincingly argues that surprise attack is unquestionably still an advantage:

Surprise attack is still possible and that in spite of the vast increase in expenditure for collecting and analyzing intelligence data, the balance of advantage seems clearly to have shifted since Pearl Harbor in favor of a surprise attack.⁶

One fact looms clearly. The Soviets do not consider preventive war against the United States as a moral question. To the Soviet mind, preventive war is decreed by history.⁷ The Soviets have told us and are still telling us what they intend to do and how they expect to go about it.⁸

A DISTINCTION: SOVIET CAPABILITIES; SOVIET PROPAGANDA

The estimate of increased danger of war parallels a noticeable and readily identified pattern of Soviet propaganda charges that the West is preparing for a preventive war and a surprise attack on the Soviet Bloc. These charges seem to be becoming more frequent. They were embedded in the Communist Party Program in the summer of 1961.⁹

Some of these volatile charges are worth reviewing. Before doing so, emphasis must be placed upon the continuing requirement

⁶Roberta Wohlstetter, Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision, p. 399.

⁷Chester C. Ward, "Old Myths and New Realities," Orbis, Vol. 8, Summer 1964, p. 264.

⁸Thomas S. Power, Design for Survival, p. 46.

⁹Herbert S. Dinerstein, and others, Soviet Military Strategy, p. 42.

to distinguish between Soviet doctrine and capabilities and Soviet propaganda. Not to do so can be fatal. Throughout this study the compelling reason to suggest that the United States consider preemptive strategy always has appeared from the Soviet capability and threats to initiate a nuclear attack.

The propaganda contained in the following Soviet statement does not obscure what this paper suggests as a valid and credible Soviet intention to strike the United States when the opportunity arises.

Marshal of the Soviet Union R. Malinovsky states the Soviet plan as:

Soviet servicemen are persistently studying and perfecting methods of reliably repelling a surprise nuclear attack of the enemy by promptly dealing him a crushing retaliatory blow. Therein lies the chief general task of our armed forces at the present stage.¹⁰

The inquiry into preemption that this thesis has conducted thus far has focused light upon one major aspect that, in America, might be overlooked. The Soviets may have embraced nuclear surprise attack and have the means to execute it. There are other indications of their intentions to name just two: (1) a sustained Soviet development program designed to build a military posture capable of devastating the U.S., and (2) continued development

¹⁰R. Malinovsky, "Faithful Guard of the Peace," The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. 16, 18 Mar. 1964, p. 33. (The word "timely" is substituted for "crushing" in a report of same speech.) See Daily Report, USSR & East Europe, Feb. 1964, p. 268.

of high yield weapons as witnessed by their breaking the 1961 test moratorium.

The examination will further sketch some factors of the balance concept that could tempt the Soviets to attack. But before that area is investigated, a few statements should be added in regard to the Soviet position on preemption.

Soviet rhetoric customarily claims the recognized pragmatic results that could be expected from a preemptive attack. They disclaim loudly that they would ever contemplate any such course. Their answer is always wrapped in phrases and pronouncements that refer only to retaliatory strikes. A thin line exists between the Soviet conception of a surprise attack and a retaliatory strike. This thesis suggests that the line is imperceptible, and that the restraint imposed upon America's nuclear power significantly contributes to the weakening of the second concept of the balance of power--deterrence.¹¹

THE CONCEPT OF DETERRENCE IN THE POWER BALANCE

Perhaps the most important characteristic of any balancing system is the degree of stability--the strength of tendencies for the system to remain in balance once equilibrium has been reached.¹² Until the Soviets moved into Cuba, the universal opinion held was

¹¹Thomas W. Wolfe, "Shifts in Soviet Strategic Thought," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 42, Apr. 1964, p. 483.

¹²Glenn H. Snyder, "Balance of Power in the Missile Age," Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1960, p. 26.

that the combination of ICBM's and manned bombers was of sufficient number that if this nation were attacked, strategic retaliatory forces could still inflict unacceptable damage upon the Soviets. It is of no small concern that Cuba indicated that the Soviets could have introduced sufficient numbers of weapons where the Soviet Union would have enough "first strike" power to reduce--if not neutralize this retaliatory power to the point where it would no longer serve as a deterrent against Soviet attack. The Cuban crisis focused full attention upon the deterrent posture of the United States. Perhaps this posture may not be too credible to the Soviets. The risk of war could be viewed as allowing the world to continue in a twilight zone where one side assumes that collective security exists. The Soviets could count on taking advantage of the fact it does not.¹³

The Soviet military planner of today must be constantly assured of the resolve that is inherent in America's nuclear deterrent policy. The Soviet planner does not view deterrence nor the concept in the power balance as the United States does. The Soviets espouse a form of unilateral deterrence, one which restrains the West only.¹⁴ This contrasts vividly with the United States view of the bilateral approach. Soviet view of deterrence can be described as a temporary and unfortunate expedient. It is

¹³"Detente Through Firmness," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 42, Jan. 1964, p. 184.

¹⁴Frederick H. Gareau, "Nuclear Deterrence: The Soviet Position," Orbis, Vol. 8, Winter, 1965, p. 936.

designed to hold the West at bay while the "inexorable process of history spells the doom of capitalism."¹⁵ The Soviets do not and will not accept our approach to deterrence. One plausible reason for their approach might appear as:

The true Sons of Marx and Lenin are forbidden by holy writ from accepting bilateral deterrence because it implies that the Great Socialist Motherland is restrained from launching a nuclear strike, by fear of retaliation, not by her innate virtue and her historically necessary love of peace.¹⁶

On this note some of the rigid requirements for an effective U.S. nuclear deterrent should be recalled. Retaliation implies use of nuclear weapons only after this nation has been struck. Retaliation is the principal military element of a deterrent policy. That response must necessarily be viewed as credible only through the eyes of the Soviet planner. America's deterrent posture could be greatly strengthened by removing the policy of accepting the first blow. This action would serve to force the Soviets to revise their thinking about deterrence to the extent that they would view America's policy in the full dimension for which it was designed. That dimension includes the resolve to prevent any enemy from seizing upon an opportunity to prepare to launch a nuclear attack upon this nation. Resolve is best described as planning for a Soviet nuclear attack. General Bernard Schriever adds considerable weight to this contention. This

¹⁵George F. Kennan, Russia, The Atom and the West, p. 53.

¹⁶Gareau, loc. cit.

distinguished Air Force general, who was the architect for the development of the U.S. ballistic missile program, voiced his responsible opinion in answering a series of penetrating questions:

Is our own missile strength growing to a point where a missile attack by Russia would be foolhardy?

I believe it would be dangerous to rule out that possibility. The side which has the advantage of choosing the time and the place has a tremendous advantage in the nuclear-rocket age. The only way that makes any sense for measuring our deterrent capability is in terms of "strike back" capability.

Is a policy of taking the first strike a wise one?

I can't speak for national policy. However, it is clear that one in the military must plan for all eventualities.¹⁷

Further, the strengthening of deterrence might well cause the Soviets to approach deterrence as a bilateral effort rather than the opposite view. Deterrence requires credibility and communicability. Both the United States and the Soviet Union must arrive at an identical calculus of strategic devices.¹⁸

If the Soviets should gain the advantage over the United States in military strength through some technological breakthrough which might give them a temporary but nevertheless a

¹⁷Bernard A. Schriever, Interview, "1960 - Best Year We've Had in the Missile Business," U.S. News & World Report, 23 Jan. 1961, p. 70.

¹⁸Robert Strausz-Hupe and others, A Forward Strategy for America, p. 114.

distinct advantage, the temptation to attack this nation could prove irresistible. The House Committee on Armed Services has stated this belief in these words:

In fact not to take advantage of such an opportunity would be against their doctrine, provided that the risk to the Soviet Union /the revolution base/ was not too great . . . the attack upon the U.S. would be to hurry the revolution.¹⁹

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE MILITARY CONCEPT IN THE POWER EQUATION

Even though neither the United States nor the Soviets presently consider it wise or even necessary to initiate a nuclear war, events, be they political or technological changes, may alter this situation with dramatic suddenness. Even if one assumes that the Soviets would not be the beneficiary of a technological breakthrough this does not preclude the possibility of a Soviet nuclear attack on the United States.

A distinct advantage may accrue to the Soviets as a result of a breakthrough in space technology. Further, this advantage would be of the most serious implications, not the least of which would be the sudden and drastic upsetting of the balance of power. The American nuclear strategy would be confronted by a wide range of uncertainties that could not help but evolve from the shift in the power equation.

¹⁹US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Service, United States Defense Policies in 1960, p. 14.

The United States Secretary of Defense expressed this uncertainty in 1963 when he stated:

Space technology is new and its implications especially for the military mission cannot be fully known or foreseen at this time. It is these very uncertainties about the character and importance of space undertakings for military purposes that have required us to give such emphasis to space in the defense program.²⁰

The effectiveness of the U.S. deterrent policy could hang in balance by the thinnest of threads. The development of new guidance techniques or homing devices for ballistic warheads might well tend to negate the deterrent effectiveness of intercontinental missiles in hardened launch sites.²¹

The salient questions that must be focused upon by the American strategist are dictated by any new environment in which military forces will be involved. Space is that new environment. Strategic relationships will change. They cannot remain static.

One might begin to think about how the Soviets will act in this new environment. Certainly there will be much speculation regarding the Soviet use of their newly acquired space technologies.

Our very survival may be at stake as a result of the Soviets in space. It is quite possible that the Soviets surprise weapon

²⁰Robert Strange McNamara, "The Next Five Years," The General Electric Forum, Vol. 6, Apr. - Jun. 1963, p. 8.

²¹Albert R. Hibbs, "Space Technology: The Threat and the Promise," Armament and Arms Control: An International Journal, Vol. 3, Spring, 1965, p. 65.

would be an offensive space system. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the United States could face a "space Cuba."²²

The United States must be prepared to shape strategy accordingly. The future developments in space by the Soviets will be rapid and sweeping. The United States will develop means of defense by pushing technology, but the capability to employ every element of deterrence must keep pace with the technological advancements.

General Schriever summed this up when he said:

In the future the impact of space on National security will undoubtedly increase. . . . The prudent source of action today and for the years ahead is to take out insurance against the use of space for aggressive purposes.²³

As military operations in space begin to enfold at an ever increasing rate, the pressing requirement to examine all elements of a United States strategy becomes readily identified.

In this technological war-of-maneuver, the exploration of space coupled to spectacular Soviet advances, presents an enormous challenge to American security.

Initially, space vehicles will not be capable of dispersal. Concealment will not exist. Limited fuel supply will prohibit

²²Power, op. cit., p. 241.

²³Bernard A. Schriever, "Implications of Space Exploration For National Security," Air Force Policy Letter For Commanders, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, No. 9, Sep. 1965, p. 17.

large changes in orbital paths.²⁴ Military space vehicles will not be hardened or otherwise protected.

Both the Soviets and this nation will therefore have, at some given point in the future, mutual vulnerable military forces. This Kissinger describes as, "The classic condition for pre-emptive war."²⁵

Sheer numbers of space systems might provide the United States a degree of invulnerability. To attempt this would, however, result in the highest degree of instability. This condition represents an overwhelming first strike capability. This posture might well be interpreted as preparations for a surprise blow and tempt a Soviet attack.

The incentive for attack by the Soviets will grow steadily as military space weapons begin to appear in earth orbits. Military space systems will play an important role for the United States in future antimissile defense. Manned orbital bombers are entirely possible. Second strike forces may be located in various near earth orbits. Obviously, many more possibilities become apparent in time, particularly when manned, maneuverable, and recoverable space systems become an integral part of a nation's weapon inventory.

²⁴US Congress, House, Select Committee on Astronautics and Its Applications, Staff Report of the Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration, 85th Congress, 2d Session, 1959, p. 202.

²⁵Kissinger, op. cit., p. 31.

Regardless of avowed intentions to keep this nation's space effort directed primarily toward exploration, the Soviets will force us to keep pace with orbital weapons. Senator Gore explained the U.S. position in these future actions when he stated, "The United States has no intention of placing weapons of mass destruction in orbit unless compelled to do so by actions of the Soviet Union."²⁶

As these events occur, the restraints now placed upon the nuclear power of the United States must be carefully examined. If both the United States and the USSR consider that both sides are invulnerable, a premium will be put on Soviet recklessness. In the light of all that is known about Soviet intentions and actions any doubt about the United States resolve to thwart any aggressive acts that arise from the enemy's decision to risk nuclear war must be removed.

RECONNAISSANCE FROM SPACE--THE INDISPENSABLE CONDITION

It has been noted that space could offer to the Soviets an opportunity to further develop both "first" and "second strike"

²⁶Albert Gore, "United States Policy on Outer Space," Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 58, 7 Jan. 1963, p. 21. (As early as 1959 the Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration, U. S. House of Representatives recognized the potentialities of orbital weapons. "The feasibility of delivering devices from a satellite to the earth's surface implies the possibility of bombing from a satellite, note of which has been taken in both the United States and the U.S.S.R.") See US Congress, House, Select Committee on Astronautics and Its Applications, Staff Report of the Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration, 85th Congress, 2d Session, 1959, p. 207.

capability. The temptation to attack could arise. Of equal consideration, space holds out great promise to the United States. For the first time, this country will be capable of maintaining what this paper will refer to as dynamic reconnaissance. The definition of this term implies that United States orbiting military satellites will be capable of surveillance of the Soviet Union minute to minute, twenty-four hours a day. The United States will possess the capability to employ space vehicles as a means of degrading the effectiveness of a Soviet surprise nuclear attack.

Satellite reconnaissance systems could give us the incontrovertible evidence of attack that is fundamental to the strategy of preemption. It is an indispensable condition. Before the advent of space systems, aircraft were the principal means of acquiring knowledge of the Soviet's disposition and numbers of nuclear missiles and aircraft. It is common knowledge that the U-2 flights that began in 1956 were instigated for that purpose. Former President Eisenhower stresses this as he relates:

When the Soviets rejected my open skies proposal in 1955 I decided that more intelligence about their war-making capabilities was a necessity . . . from 1956 onward its /U-2/ basic mission was to provide us with current information on the status of the Soviet missile and armaments programs.²⁷

This capability has now been enlarged upon to a quantum degree. It requires little speculation to visualize what unmatched intelligence capabilities the United States will acquire

²⁷Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace 1956-1961, p. 483.

as the tidal wave of advancements in space develop and are implemented as integral components of our strategic forces. The change-over to space vehicles as replacement for the obsolete U-2 began some time ago. The mission remains identical to that of the U-2 reconnaissance airplane.²⁸ Of overwhelming importance is the already marked increase in capability that will undoubtedly continue to grow at a dramatic and accelerated rate. To further pursue this point it is unnecessary and would necessitate a review of available but classified resources. It might be appropriate, however, to recall to the reader's attention some revealing facts regarding the ability to observe from space platforms.

At this writing (7 December 1965), the American astronauts Colonel Frank Borman and Commander James Lovell currently orbiting in space vehicle, Gemini 6, have reported that they easily detected and observed a practice launching of a Polaris missile from a U.S. submarine.²⁹ This observation was almost identical to one made earlier by the astronauts in Gemini 5 who spotted the Minuteman missiles being launched, smoke trails, wakes of ships, even the contrails of jet aircraft.³⁰ It is significant that these launchings were observed with the unaided eye. One can surmise with ease what intelligence capabilities exist if electronic,

²⁸Ibid., p. 552.

²⁹"New Steps Toward Moon," New York Times, 12 Dec. 1965, p. 1E.

³⁰"Gemini 5: Man's Toughest Test," Newsweek, 6 Sep. 1965, pp. 46-48.

heat, sound sensors, and advanced optical devices were to be employed as these vehicles survey the Soviet Union and Red China.

Only a few of the compelling reasons that would prompt the consideration to eliminate the U.S. restraint on reacting to a known enemy attack on our nation have been reviewed. There are indeed many more considerations that could have been examined; however, it would seem that all such inquiry would return to the single overriding reason to frame a requirement for a study of preemptive strategy. That underlying issue is the evidence of a Soviet surprise attack that has been observed in Soviet strategic thought. There does not appear to be one shred of conflicting evidence that would indicate that the Soviets have dismissed a nuclear surprise attack upon the U.S. as a distinct possibility.

If this is a valid observation, the mobilizing of strategic thought to prepare for such an eventuality is a patent requirement.

The United States should now take the steps to closely examine preemption as both an element of self-defense and an element of deterrence. Preemption would certainly pose a number of difficult questions, particularly from the American people. The problem of justifying a war, either before its opening, as a measure of policy, or upon the cessation of hostilities, is practically as old as written history.³¹ The American populace has always found the thought of war distasteful even when there was complete

³¹Alfred Vagts, Defense and Diplomacy: The Soldier and the Conduct of Foreign Relations, p. 267.

assurance that America could win in the end, or come out as a whole sound nation. The popular attitude may be far different when there is strong and undeniable evidence that this would not be the case in a thermonuclear war.

To this author there is a great deal of expressed ignorance on the subject of preemption, but paradoxically it is difficult to find a subject that does not evoke more bedrock opinions. This we should now review as the "polemics of preemption."

CHAPTER 5

THE POLEMICS OF PREEMPTION

In Chapter 2, a sample of earlier American reactions to preemption was observed. These responses could be labeled as varying from mercurial to calm analysis, from persuasive argument to explosive rejection.

For purposes of providing a balance to the examination, the assumption will be advanced that a study of preemption by the United States has now been undertaken. It is not the intent of this paper to examine the methods or procedures that would be employed in either declaring the adoption of such a policy or otherwise merely considering the alteration of the established policy that disavows preemption. It is intended, however, to indicate the nature and character of certain responses that could be expected if such a study were undertaken.

It would appear that a serious examination of preemption would be wrapped in secrecy and held at the highest levels within the government. Regardless of the security involved, the issue of preemption would become a matter of open discussion.

Former President Eisenhower alludes to this exact pattern when he discusses with Vice President Nixon his apprehensiveness concerning any disclosure of the secret Gaither Committee findings. Mr. Nixon observed that "most of the recommendations are already in the papers anyway. Making the document public should give us

no great problem."¹ General Eisenhower was soon reading a roughly accurate account of these proceedings that were appearing in the press and other news media. Just before these accounts appeared, the President had remarked to his staff, "It will be interesting to find out how long it [the Gaither Report] can be kept secret."²

There seems therefore sufficient grounds upon which this paper can make the assumption that the issue of preemption, if it were seriously studied by the United States, would in rapid order enter into the arena of polemics.

THE CASE AGAINST: AND REBUTTAL

The pattern of the controversy could well mirror that of almost 10 years ago. The searing argument against preemption would revolve around moral or religious grounds. An example of this type of argument appeared in 1961. "The case against preemptive attack is essentially religious. Our national life is based on a belief in, and a trust in God. Preemptive attack denies this faith."³ Again, the case against preemption suggests that preventive war and preemption are the same in intent, that time is the difference. Further, preemption repudiates our stand against aggression, rejects Christian ideology and would expose us as "consummate hypocrites."⁴ It is important to note that the

¹Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace 1956-1961, p. 221.

²Ibid.

³Warren G. Corliss, "The Case Against Pre-emptive Attack," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 87, Jul. 1961, p. 35.

⁴Ibid., p. 33.

author of this statement lists the chief reason for rejecting preemption as a "fear of Russian retaliation."⁵

This argument against preemption totally ignores a question that clearly emerges when the heart of the matter is examined. Is maximum security for the American people under any and all circumstances guaranteed? The answer appears as a dilemma when we review the U.S. Defense Policy statements,

When an attack is believed to be imminent shall we hit first in an effort to reduce the destruction which is sure to result from a nuclear exchange and try to win or at least prevail in the ensuing conflict, or shall we accept the first blow and hope to save enough of our retaliatory forces to cripple the enemy.⁶

Hoping to save enough is far removed from even attempting to guarantee maximum security for this nation. This nation has not only a moral right, but indeed an obligation to provide every chance for survival.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Ten years ago preemption was termed only as a preventive war doctrine, or a "full first strike."⁷ This was and is now

⁵Ibid.

⁶US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, United States Defense Policies in 1960, p. 19.

⁷("Those who advocate /full first strike/ believe that the United States should have a force capable of damaging the Soviet strategic force so badly in a first strike that the damage it could then render the U.S. in a retaliatory attack would be reduced to an 'acceptable' level.") See US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, United States Defense Policies in 1963, p. 19. (Secretary McNamara points out that a full first strike is "simply unattainable in the fiscal year 1967-69 period." I know of no responsible Pentagon official, certainly none of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who proposes such a force.") See Robert Strange McNamara, Statement before Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965, 88th Congress, 2nd Session, Part Four, p. 27.

unacceptable to American principles and ideals. The suggestion here is that if preemption were to be studied, the comprehension of preemptive concepts by the American people would necessarily have to be a product of education and interest. Once the focus of interest is centered on a particular issue and that issue is discussed by American officials, the American people respond in a predictable pattern. Surveys indicate that the U.S. public understands concepts of extremely complicated issues if the interest by the government is directed toward the subject.⁸ In the preceding chapter a compelling reason for studying preemption was examined. It is contended that once some of the hard facts of this nuclear age were made known, the American people would not view preemption as any monstrous proposal. Indeed, and again if the character of preemption were analyzed in terms of an essential element of our defense, the American public might well lend the fullest of support. The moral argument is certainly not to be overlooked, but undue emphasis upon this contention is simply not justified.

The critics of preemption who refer constantly to the mores and moral scruples of the American people rising to block such a policy are overlooking American thought in past actions that involved great risk. Eighty percent of the public was ready to

⁸("The public listens to the administration, not the critics and the reassurances of the Administration induce mass acquiescence in its policies.") See Samuel P. Huntington, The Common Defense, pp. 240-242, 303. (Public opinion wants the government "to describe things as they are - it tends to deny the need for enlarging the problem.") See Paul Peeters, Massive Retaliation, p. 23.

stay in Berlin [Crisis of 1961] regardless of the high risk of war with the Soviets. Only a minority of Americans felt guilty about the use of the atom bomb against Japan. A 1946 survey reveals that almost 50% of the Americans polled favored what could now be called preemption.⁹

A glance back at the Cuban missile crisis provides a concrete clue to the character of this nation. Once knowing the facts, America became instantaneously ready to support the President in resorting to force in defense of our system of values. Preemption as an essential element in our nuclear strategy should in no way be unacceptable to the American conscience.

THE BRITISH AND FRENCH: WITHIN THE ARENA OF POLEMICS

America has on numerous occasions been extraordinarily insensitive to the conclusions which Europeans might possibly draw from new U.S. strategic doctrines.¹⁰ The objective here is to indicate what the climate of opinion would be toward the United States if a preemptive strategy were studied.

⁹Gabriel A. Almond, The American People and Foreign Policy, p. 92. (The noted and authoritative foreign affairs analyst, C. L. Sulzberger, described the American reaction to the Berlin crisis as, "American public opinion has plainly indicated that it is ready to follow the nation's leader to the brink of war and, if need be right to war itself.") See C. L. Sulzberger, "The Need for a Triple Play," New York Times, 7 Oct. 1961, p. 22.

¹⁰Anthony Hartley, "The British Bomb, What Deters Who, How and Why," Encounter, Vol. 22, May 1964, p. 26.

A brief review of the basic policies of the pacifist, unilateralist wing of the Labour Party of Britain permits some conclusions as to how the opposition to preemption would be characterized. The CND, or "Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament," is the most significant new political movement Britain has produced since the war. The "CND" or unilateralists are staunch anti-Americans. Even in terms of practical politics, the CND has left a far deeper mark than is admitted. The agitation produced by the CND over any thought of preemption more than likely could result in a furor. The use of nuclear weapons under any and all circumstances is violently opposed by adherents to this line.¹¹

The organization could cause considerable confusion in any controversy regarding preemption. General Andre Beaufre considers the "CND" entirely in this light when he said,

No set of problems is more awkward in form or raises a wider range of political issues than that of defense. This is an area of policy that has already suffered from the confusion generated by the smoke-screen (or barrage of tear gas) laid down by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.¹²

Although not as violent in reaction but nonetheless just as emphatic in condemning preemption would be a principal spokesman of the Labour Party. The reaction would be one of trying to

¹¹John Mander, "The Logic of Survival," Encounter, Vol. 21, Jul. 1963, p. 75. ("Unilateralists" are never easy to pin down for it was always intellectually ambiguous. The essence of the movement might be described as "nuclear pacifism.")

¹²Andre Beaufre, as quoted by Anthony Hartley, The British Bomb, What Deters Who, How and Why, p. 22.

convince the U.S. to avoid any situation in which the West would ever use nuclear weapons first. The overall picture within the political arena of opinion could appear to be that of viewing the likelihood of a Soviet nuclear attack as an extremely remote possibility. The mere consideration by America to examine preemption would be to many informed quarters a fatal fallacy and the start of World War III.¹³ It is of importance to the reader to note that some British strategists believe that the United States Strategic Air Force has already adopted preemption. Deep concern has been expressed as, "the adoption of such a doctrine preemption by S.A.C. SIC was deeply foolish if only because the United States Government was most unlikely to allow them to implement it."¹⁴ Further, the ex-Minister of the Labour Party voices the general feeling toward the matter when he concludes, "Fortunately, the evidence does not compel us to conclude that in the present instance either government USSR-USA has adopted the doctrine of preemptive strike."¹⁵

The noted British writer B. H. Liddell Hart believes if nuclear weapons are ever used the world will see mutual suicide. Nuclear weapons are of value only as "a deterrent . . . no real value as a defence."¹⁶

¹³John Strachey, On the Prevention of War, p. 49. ("Adoption of preemption would lead to nuclear war.")

¹⁴Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁶B. H. Liddell Hart, Deterrent or Defense, p. 52.

Counterargument to those who would voice loud protest to preemption could be found within the Air Staff in Britain which, it appears, has recognized the highly questionable capability of insuring an invulnerable "second strike force." The study of preemption could perhaps find support from the Air Staff if their strategic thought follows the pattern observed here:

Both the Air Staff in Britain and their counterparts in the United States know that this (getting our retaliatory missiles off the ground before the Soviet missiles hit) can never be done-not because it is impossible to design a missile early warning system . . . but because no Western government would give permission to fire missiles with thermonuclear warheads . . . merely on radar evidence of a surprise attack. Permission would never be given until the enemy bombs had actually exploded, when it would be too late.¹⁷

Here again it can readily be observed that concrete intelligence of impending attack is the salient requirement. If this intelligence capability could reach the level of highest reliability, the United States might well find the British Air Staff lending full support in developing a preemptive attack strategy.

More specific support could be suggested by those who seriously question our intention to respond to nuclear attacks upon Europe. Surprising as it may be, proponents of preemption could emerge as they view this strategy as a resolve to assure security of U.S. allies. This seems to be the case when we examine this informed thought.

¹⁷US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, "Defence of the Realm," as quoted in US Defense Policies in 1960, p. 19.

McNamara has confirmed the opinion of his European critics that he was far more concerned about American security-bolstered by the elimination of the preemptive strike risk - than about Europe whose safety depends on American strategic counterforce capability.¹⁸

While it is undeniably true that a storm of protest would arise against a U.S. adoption of preemption we should examine with extreme care wherein that protest finds support. If we turn for a glance at England, the major thrust of the opponents would seemingly be discovered within a recognized pacifist group. The Former Minister of State of Britain's Foreign Office, Kenneth Younger, clearly underscores the relatively little effect such opinion has upon British policies. "British public opinion rarely makes itself decisively felt as a separate force of which governments consciously take account."¹⁹

The British government rarely submits all of its actions to popular approval. This is indeed a sharp contrast to the American approach.

What this thesis suggests here is that reliance upon the "special relationship" with the United States is the total indication of what Great Britain's response would be. England subordinated its own defense planning to American control of the major nuclear forces at the close of 1962.²⁰ Prime Minister Wilson has

¹⁸Raymond Aron, The Great Debate - Theories of Nuclear Strategy, p. 82.

¹⁹Kenneth Younger, "Public Opinion and British Foreign Policy," International Affairs, Jan. 1964, p. 31.

²⁰Shepard B. Clough, and others, A History of the Western World, p. 1300.

repeatedly stated that Britain was moving toward complete reliance in the "nuclear umbrella" of the United States. The main strength of England in deterring Soviet aggression is in the nuclear delivery capability of the United States.²¹ The British defense policy in general and the role of nuclear weapons has depended upon the attitude of the United States almost as much as on that of the Soviet Union.

Great Britain would find it very difficult to set itself against the United States in any way if we were to adopt preemption. British informed opinion has confidence in American intentions in a way that is certainly not the case with other allies.²²

This becomes readily apparent as we observe a brief sketch of the French response to a U.S. study of preemption.

Where we observed debate, inflammatory denunciations and perhaps resigned attitudes in the British arena of polemics, the French reaction would perhaps be of a totally opposite pattern of response. The pattern would be determined by President Charles de Gaulle. President de Gaulle is the prime architect of French policy.²³ Underlying the French national security policy is the

²¹George W. Keeton, and Georg Schwarzenberger, ed., The Year Book of World Affairs, 1963, p. 17. (The British Press underscores this point, "It [The British Government] has also gone farther than ever before, although perhaps not yet far enough towards accepting that our military planning must be fully integrated with America's.") See Manchester Guardian Weekly, Vol. 76, 18 Apr. 1957, p. 1.

²²Hartley, op. cit., p. 32.

²³Raymond Aron, "The Gaullist Republic," Encounter, Vol. 20, Mar. 1963, p. 8.

firm dependence upon America's determination to defend Europe. Against this backdrop de Gaulle could view a study of preemption as a further sign of America's deeper involvement in assuring the protection of European allies. De Gaulle's well established independent behavior has depended entirely upon our past, current and future commitments that have irrevocably dictated involvement in the security of France. The initial reaction to an American study of preemption could parallel French response to our actions during the Cuban missile crisis. The French viewed the United States policy at that time as preferring the defense of U.S. geographic approaches to that of Europe.²⁴ Or again France might warn us, as they did during the Dominican crisis, to stop playing the role of anti-Communist vigilante.²⁵ De Gaulle could view American preemptive strategy as an unmatched opportunity to be an arbiter of world peace. He has given ample evidence that he thinks of himself in precisely that role. He could, quite readily, relish playing this central role in "splendid isolation."²⁶ De Gaulle dominates French politics. Likewise, he would dominate the total response of the French to our intentions regarding preemption. President de Gaulle would view our study as only another opportunity to score a diplomatic trump card against the United States.

²⁴Andre Fontaine, as quoted by Nathan Leites, Guesses About de Gaulle, p. 28.

²⁵US Central Intelligence Agency, "Foreign Radio and Press Reaction to U.S. Involvement in the Dominican Revolt, World Reaction Series, No. 3, 4 May 1965, p. 1.

²⁶Leites, op. cit., p. 29.

His actions would be only political and would perhaps be noticed in a very limited number of his press conferences. Raymond Aron provides an interesting insight into the French President's character when he says: "General de Gaulle's press conferences are works of art but they are also political acts. I myself believe without being able to prove it, that General de Gaulle himself does not take seriously half the arguments he uses."²⁷ De Gaulle would voice some comments but these statements would rapidly disappear from the scene. This is of course purely speculative but there does not appear to be any evidence wherein to indicate that de Gaulle would make an issue of this subject. There are certainly potential sources of Franco-American friction²⁸ but there is no suggestion that a study of preemption would be one of those sources. On the contrary there is some evidence, admittedly shallow, that a preemptive study might be better understood by the French with perhaps some tangible support for such a strategy. The French press has not always approved of American policies and military actions, nonetheless they have attempted to understand Washington policy.²⁹ Certainly a preemptive strategy would find support in some quarters. This may be found within the French military where at least one senior officer, General Pierre M. Gallois who is

²⁷Aron, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁸David H. Popper, "Statement of Director, Political and Military Affairs," Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 52, 8 Feb. 1965, p. 186.

²⁹US Central Intelligence Agency, op. cit., p. 7.

described as de Gaulle's "one man military brain trust." General Gallois does not accept a military strategy of response that is not based upon nuclear weapons. He is further described as very strong in favor of nuclear response because in his opinion, to do otherwise is to encourage aggression. While this does not of course identify the General as an advocate of preemption, there could nevertheless be some hint that he would not view a study as an irresponsible action. In any event it is highly unlikely that the study would come under critical abuse from General Gallois.³⁰

Before leaving the French attitude there is perhaps one salient feature that could provide a clue to an overall response. It appears that the French might consider our actions toward preemption as strictly an affair of our own. The French could take the position that the United States needs no advice from any nation, much less critical acclaim or abuse. In this instance, it would appear that the French reaction to preemption would be identical to Charles de Gaulle's response. That is, the matter would be viewed with an air of aloofness and a subject isolated from total French thought. Premier Pompidou's recent statement appears to support this contention: "If the President of the United States

³⁰ Pierre M. Gallois, interview, "The American Strategic Fallacy," in Der Spiegel, Atlas, The World Press in Translation, Jan. 1965, p. 10. (General Gallois appears to be entirely specific in favoring preemption when he says: "Not to seize the initiative would be to ignore the salient factors of conflict in the nuclear age.") See Pierre M. Gallois, "U.S. Foreign Policy: A Study in Military Strength and Diplomatic Weakness," Orbis, Vol. 9, Summer 1965, p. 352.

considers that nuclear forces must be engaged, he has 95% of the American atomic weapons at his disposal for that and does not need to ask anyone's advice."³¹

THE PENETRATING ARGUMENT AGAINST PREEMPTION--AND REBUTTAL

An attempt to revive the strategy of preemption may be immediately turned aside by the United States Department of Defense but more specifically by Mr. Robert McNamara. The Secretary does not accept the contention that preemption is an essential element of a defense posture, nor does the thought that preemption is related directly to the strategy of deterrence appear acceptable to him. The Secretary has stated his views quite clearly and forcefully. In a 1962 interview, Mr. McNamara said, "Because we have a sure second strike capability there is no pressure on us whatever to preempt. I assure you that we really never think in those terms."³²

In concluding the Secretary added, "One point I was making in the Ann Arbor speech is that our second-strike capability is so sure that there would be no rational basis on which to launch a preemptive strike."³³

³¹Georges Pompidou, Statement by the French Premier Georges Pompidou, Speeches and Press Conference No. 224, 15 Jun. 1965, p. 3. (According to a Rand analysis the French assumed this exact attitude during the Cuban missile crisis. "The French went through the crisis in stony silence.") See Rand Corporation, British Attitudes in the Cuban Crisis, p. 4.

³²Robert S. McNamara, Interview with Stewart Alsop, "Our New Strategy: The Alternatives to Total War," Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 235, 1 Dec. 1962, p. 18.

³³Alsop, loc. cit.

To some American strategists and military analysts, Mr. McNamara foresees mutual deterrence. If this is correct then the continuance of study and research of methods and weapons designed to regain U.S. nuclear superiority becomes of paramount importance.³⁴ At this given point in time, the United States must rely upon an invulnerable second strike force to make our deterrent policy credible. An invulnerable second strike capability is an extremely difficult job to maintain. If deterrence fails the U.S. is left with no rational military strategy. No enemy can be disarmed, nor can the United States preserve the core of our nation as a body capable of executing policy. If deterrence fails, the only reaction for this nation is to support a purpose that has ceased to exist. The purpose of deterrence is to prevent such an action from ever occurring.³⁵

Unquestionably the total opposition by the Defense Department would preclude any study. This paper submits that the growing threat from space, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by hostile nations and the total dependence upon our retaliatory forces to survive a devastating nuclear attack should give sufficient cause to examine the subject.

³⁴Robert N. Ginsburgh, U.S. Military Strategy in the Sixties, p. 75.

³⁵Paul Nitze, "Power and Policy. Problems in the Defense of the West." Asilomar National Strategy Seminar Proceedings, 1960 p. 6.

A CLOSING ARGUMENT

Unquestionably the task of studying preemption would require a searching examination of many complex problems. Any undertaking of a task designed to achieve maximum security of a nation is undeniably difficult and demanding. In many instances the task may involve grave risks.

The uncertainty of our intelligence capability looms to the forefront as the principal stumbling block. George E. Lowe's recent observation indicates that our capability is indeed on a very low scale when graded against the degree required for absolute assurance that an enemy attack is about to be launched.³⁶ This lack of capability is recognized but the potential for vast improvements in this area is almost unbounded.

The possibilities of a vast and sweeping improvement in this vital effort have been observed briefly. A new and extremely effective capability could be acquired in the foreseeable future. When once acquired, does the United States exploit the capability in terms of guaranteeing our security or continue to maintain a rigid and inflexible doctrine that was developed when such a capability was nonexistent?

It is a dangerous policy to foreswear an essential element of military strategy at a time when technology advances in quantum leaps and we are already in an age of military unknowns. If the

³⁶George E. Lowe, The Age of Deterrence, p. 204.

architects of United States nuclear strategy continue to discuss nuclear power in terms of a stalemate the fear arises that this theory could have an unconscious appeal to the American public. The Soviets could hope for nothing more as a basis for planning and mobilizing their strategic thoughts. Stalemate in terms of nuclear strategy is brittle, inflexible and rigid. The term alone implies no superiority of either side.

The threat of retaliation could become less meaningful to the Soviet Union if it becomes increasingly clear to the Soviet planner that our resolve to deliver a retaliatory blow is weakened, or that we do not visualize a crystal clear advantage of delivering that retaliatory attack. Stalemate additionally implies a mutual invulnerable nuclear "second strike force."

If the study of preemption is rejected on the grounds that the United States possesses a "sure second strike capability," a series of haunting doubts begin to take form. In the era of sweeping technological change, the total reliance upon the invulnerability of strategic retaliatory forces pose an enormous task. Preemption as an element of nuclear strategy may stem entirely from necessity. Necessity no longer stems from a situation both exceptional in occurrence or readily identifiable as a distinct series of acts. Necessity springs from the singular reason that the enemy can annihilate this nation. The enemy is accruing a tremendous advantage by developing plans based upon the United States policy of awaiting an enemy nuclear attack. The elimination

of this distinct Soviet advantage is of paramount importance when the military uncertainties surrounding the use of orbiting weapon systems are examined.

The spectacular advancements in space technologies by both the Soviets and the United States indicate that in the not too distant future a space capability could become one of the dominant factors in the determination of national military strength. Should the Soviets achieve a superior position in this new environment, they would be in a position to blackmail the United States with little risk of war, or ultimately to apply against this nation some weapon system so decisive that our retaliatory effort would be seriously degraded. Space will provide the Soviets new and greater means of access to those United States forces that comprise the second strike capability. Historically, when technology has provided greater access to the enemy, major readjustments have taken place in force composition, requirements and military concepts. Preemption should be examined as a logical step toward seeking every means available in assuring maximum security in the face of a totally new threat.

This thesis concludes on the note that current arguments against preemption as a necessary element in the future formulation of national military strategy are perhaps overwhelming; that the policy of accepting the first blow is our stated intent; that the Soviet Union is entirely convinced of America's firm belief in adhering to this policy. The aggressor has indicated on

countless occasions the capability to take full advantage of our weaknesses. If it be moral reasons that prohibit an objective examination of preemption in light of advanced technology, perhaps one should reflect upon the words of Nobel Prize winner P. M. S. Blackett,

Since the Western world has often stated that it will never wage aggressive war, a preventive war is ruled out; on the other hand clearly, there can be fewer moral scruples against being the first to strike when, if you don't, you will certainly be destroyed.³⁷

³⁷P. M. S. Blackett, Studies of War, p. 91.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Incentives motivating rejection of a United States strategy of preemption fall into three broad categories: moral, military and psychological. The most obvious of these is the moral question. The salient feature of this objection is the cultural resistance of the American people to a policy of "striking the first blow." As the leaders of the Free World, the total rejection of any policy altering that stand may be of significant value. The overriding argument from the military point of view appears to rest on the grounds that the United States possesses an invulnerable second-strike force. Additionally, there is no question that a portion of the retaliatory forces will be launched prior to the arrival of enemy nuclear warheads upon this nation. The alert posture of the United States strategic forces is most certainly geared to fulfill this requirement. Thus it is argued that the combination of invulnerability and quick response completely negate any justification for a strategy of preemption. Lastly, a rejection of preemption is surrounded by the psychological aspects. Twin assumptions characterize this argument: nuclear war is unthinkable and a nuclear stalemate exists between the Soviets and the United States.

A preemptive attack strategy has been examined by the American strategist in the past. The American people completely rejected

the idea. Any attempt to reexamine the subject today, in light of a new threat, would undoubtedly meet with the same results unless certain key features of the strategy were understood clearly by the American people.

The relationship of preemptive strategy to the policy of deterrence must first be established. That relationship is one of identity of character in that they are both defensive in nature. Where earlier studies of preemption omitted this vital relationship, the strategist of today must necessarily emphasize the essential element of a self-defense doctrine that is contained in a preemptive strategy.

The fact that in the era of thermonuclear megaton weapons an aggressor can destroy a nation must be weighed against a policy of awaiting that blow and then retaliating. The total destructiveness of nuclear weapons realigns the moral question of "hitting first" to one that now states that it is the moral obligation of this nation to provide maximum security to her people. The policy of awaiting the first nuclear blow cannot to any degree provide this assurance. There is evidence to support the contention that once the American public is made fully aware of the precise intent and objectives of preemption, the strategy would be more acceptable.

Undeniably, the issue of preemption would be wrapped in controversy. The objections would arise from every known quarter. Foremost among these would be the Soviets who follow a very

familiar pattern of verbal attack upon the United States. It is the Soviet Union, however, that prompts entirely the recommendation of this paper to study preemption. The potential threat of the Soviets from space is aimed directly at the strategic retaliatory forces of this nation. The policy of foreswearing the first blow under any and all conditions is highly dangerous in the thermonuclear age.

The core of the United States nuclear power is now wrapped in restraint. The inevitability of an imbalance of power, the growing arms race, and the vast military uncertainties of space force the American strategist to examine preemption as an element of military strategy.



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