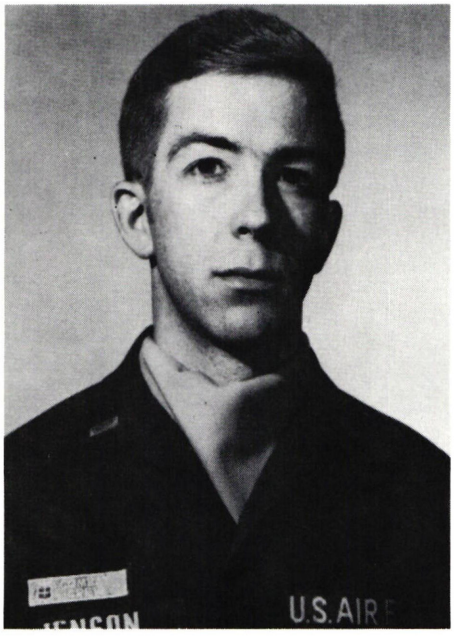



# SPRING 1979

25th ANNIVERSARY • US AIR FORCE ACADEMY • 1 APRIL 1954 – 1 APRIL 1979

# A Lieutenant Leads the Way

The 148th issue of the *Air University Review* has just been published. For more than thirty years, the lead article has typically been done by the high and mighty. Twice, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown has occupied the lead position, though not in his present capacity. An ambassador of the United States headed the line-up in the July-August 1977 edition. A congressman was number one in the March-April 1975. Former Secretaries of the Air Force have been the point man, also. Even a foreign ambassador to the United States supplied the lead in the September-October 1971 issue. Twenty-five four star generals, fourteen doctors of philosophy, eight chiefs of staff, and one Air Marshal of the Royal Air Force have also led the parade. Only once in that long line has a junior officer made the front rank, and he was a captain. Now a first lieutenant, John W. Jenson, of the 341st Strategic Missile Wing at Malstrom AFB, Montana, has joined that distinguished company. His "Nuclear Strategy: Differences in Soviet and American Thinking," not only appeared as the lead article in the March-April issue of the *Review,* but was also chosen by the Air University Awards Committee to receive the Best Article Award.




*John Jenson, '75*

Lieutenant Jenson, a 1975 Air Force Academy graduate and the holder of a master's degree from the University of Michigan, argues that the evidence of the continuing USSR strategic arms build-up is now too conclusive to ignore. He feels that that build-up is designed not only to deter war but also to give the USSR a war fighting capability. Jenson sees this as dangerous to the security of the US and that of the West and holds that there are a variety of US responses that are feasible, but identifies three as being most worthy of consideration. First, the US could return to a frank reliance on the assured destruction concept. Second, she could do a traditional balance-of-power act with a series of alliances. Finally, after seeing serious defects in the former two, he argues that an effective solution would be to perfect a powerful nuclear and conventional strategic strike force, protected from and designed primarily to neutralize Soviet offensive and conventional forces at the onset of a military conflict. This, says Jenson, would enable the US to refuse the USSR its much desired strategic force superiority, to pose an effective deterrent to the outbreak of nuclear war, and to insure the retention of a sufficient force to preserve something of the US national interest should deterrence fail.

Lieutenant Jenson concludes that America's best hope for both peace and the preservation of such stability and freedom as the world now enjoys is through the maintenance of strategic arms with a realistic counterforce capability and the demonstration of the will to maintain her interests and those of her allies.

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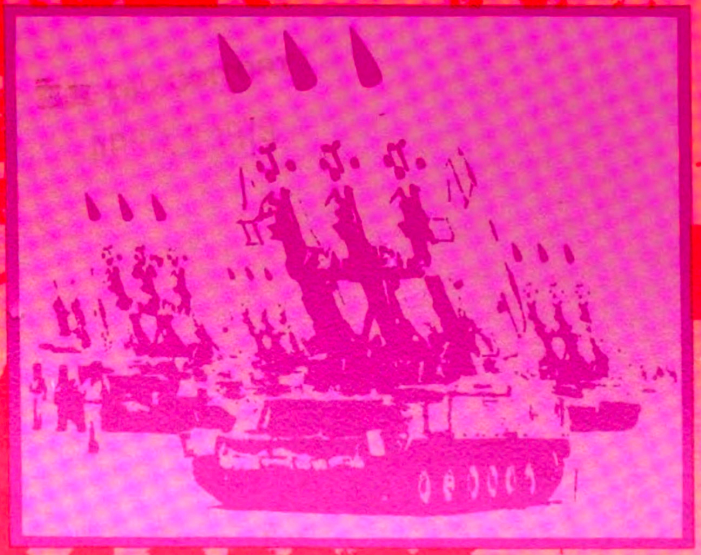

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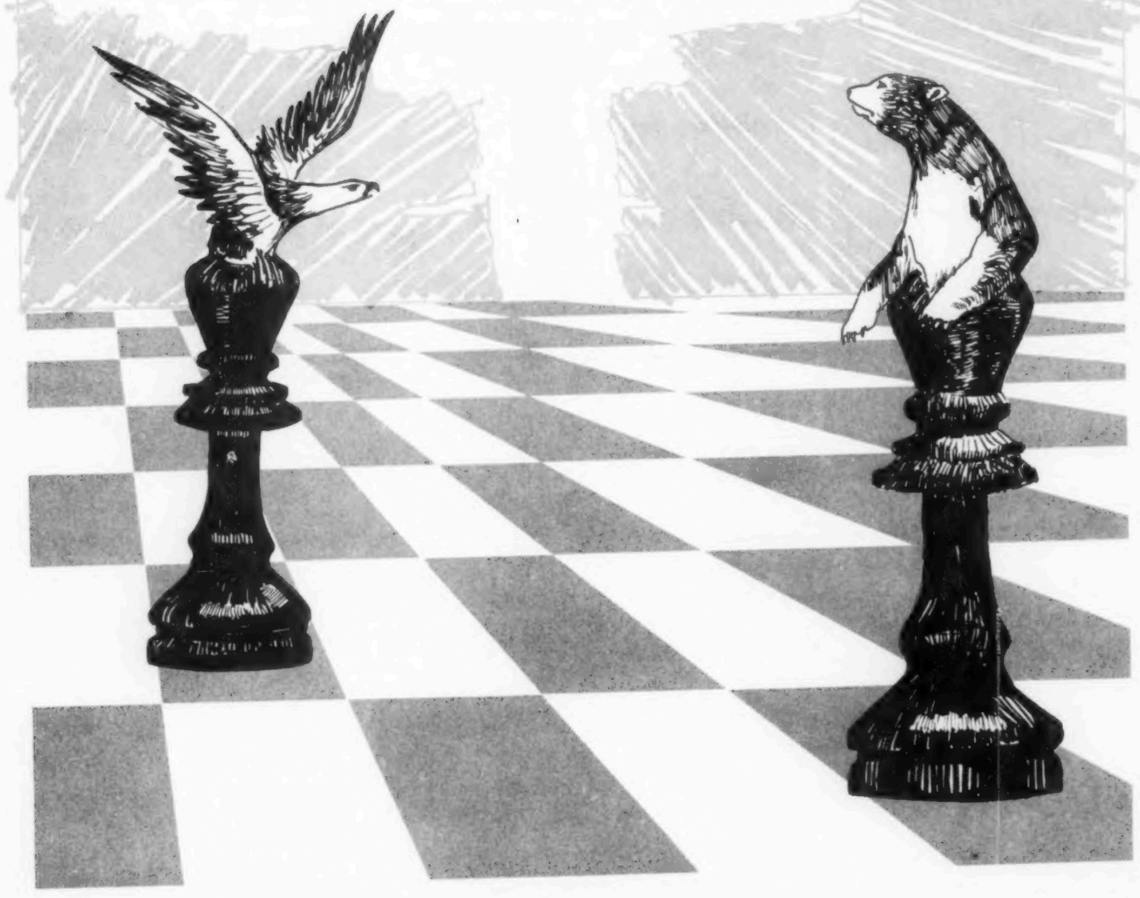
MARCH–APRIL 1979



# NUCLEAR STRATEGY

## *differences in Soviet and American thinking*

First Lieutenant John W. Jenson



MORE than any other change in the technology of war, the advent of nuclear weaponry has forced military and political leaders around the world to reassess the role of warfare in international politics and to re-examine the strategic concepts that had served them in the past. War had reached such cataclysmic and terrible proportions that even the possibility of war seemed unthinkable. More than ever before, the mandate of national strategists focused on preventing war rather than on successfully prosecuting it. The resulting debate among scholars over suitable doctrine and strategy was, unfortunately, often lacking in the objectivity and firm logic that such a discussion warranted. Some theorists went so far as to suggest that the destructiveness and ferocity of modern weaponry had made warfare obsolete as a means of resolving international conflicts. A little reflection, however, revealed that the same notion had been popular prior to both of the major wars of this century and in both instances had proved tragically false. In other circles, scholars and national leaders tended to dwell on philosophical and moral issues, all but ignoring the urgent and equally important military questions.

The uncertainty and apprehension over the implications of nuclear weaponry were compounded by the rapid polarization of the world system into two opposing, belligerent blocks after the collapse of the Axis powers. When the Soviet Union began to acquire its nuclear arsenal, speculation among political and military leaders of both sides about the nature and likelihood of nuclear war became soberingly if dismally relevant to the entire community of nations. The need for some hard intellectual scrutiny of the impact of modern weapons on the international political system became apparent. It was also apparent that if nuclear war were to be avoided, both sides would have to take active, deliberate measures to ensure against it. Thus began the search, by theoreticians in both the United States and the Soviet Union, for military doctrines and strategies appropriate for the respective nations during the nuclear age.

Before discussing the military doctrines and strategies that have evolved in the United States and the Soviet Union during the postwar era, one must define the terms "doctrine" and "strategy." Throughout the history of military thought, both have taken on a variety of meanings in different contexts. One studying the works of military theorists and strategists is often confronted with a bewildering array of definitions depending on the period of history during which the author wrote as well as on the writer's particular position and perspective.

For purposes of this discussion, military doctrine can best be defined as a set of prescriptive principles set forth as a guide for action and designed to ensure "uniformity of thought and action" throughout the armed forces of a nation in prosecuting its policies during peace and war.[1] It defines the manner in which the military is to contribute to the political activities of the state and establishes the guidelines on which military action may properly be employed in the pursuit of the goals of the state. Strategy is subordinate to doctrine and is the broad set of military actions consistent with the accepted doctrine, which are to be employed when the military is used to implement the policies of the state.

A nation's choice of military doctrine and strategy has historically reflected the intellectual and cultural climate of the times and the peculiar economic, political, geographic, and social characteristics of the country. A state's political system and ideology, its national goals and aspirations, its historical experiences, and its perception of itself and the world political environment—all contribute to its choice of appropriate doctrine and strategy, while its geography and resources determine the practicality of the strategic options open to it.

Throughout the Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s, the United States possessed continuous

superiority in number and technical quality of nuclear weapons, even if she was not always certain of the existence or extent of her lead. During the same period, the Soviet Union, well aware of U.S. strategic superiority, was generally preoccupied with catching up with the U.S. As the American lead in nuclear capability began to wane, U.S. doctrine and strategy went through a continual process of revision and adaptation to the changing balance of nuclear capability. The first explicit U.S. doctrine on the use of nuclear weapons was the doctrine of massive retaliation, conceived and articulated primarily by then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Under massive retaliation, the U.S. eschewed using limited military responses in opposition to Soviet political and military initiatives around the world and instead threatened the Soviet Union with nuclear attack for any of an unspecified list of military and political actions.[2] Such a doctrine, of course, could be tenable only while the Soviet Union had no significant strike capability against the U.S. As Soviet capabilities grew, however, and as the imprudence of massive retaliation became manifest, nuclear arms policy was divested of such sweeping political roles and began to focus exclusively on the prevention of a large-scale nuclear holocaust. U.S. policy-makers eventually realized that options short of nuclear warfare ought to be devised for dealing with lesser political and military conflicts. Ultimately, the U.S. approach to the prevention of large-scale nuclear war came to rest on a strategy of deterrence under the doctrine of mutual assured destruction, which postulated that so long as either side was capable of inflicting unacceptable damage on the other, after having itself suffered a massive attack, neither side would have any incentive to initiate a nuclear exchange.

The adoption of mutual assured destruction as the guiding principle of U.S. deterrence initiated the ensuing perpetual debate over what size and type of military forces were necessary to achieve national security. Advocates of the mutual assured destruction concept have been generally divided into two schools of thought. One side maintains that a force "balance" between both sides is necessary. The other argues that to deter a potential aggressor effectively, one need not possess superior or even equivalent military forces but simply a sufficient or adequate capability to assure the aggressor that, regardless of which side suffers the more from a nuclear exchange, the attacker will still suffer more than he is willing to bear. The "sufficiency" concept has been increasingly cited by advocates in various circles as justification for cutting back on U.S. nuclear force levels, regardless of Soviet or Chinese force buildups.

Lest the notion of sufficiency seem like too easy a solution, however, one must realize that it has some important limitations. First of all, its viability depends in turn on the viability of the mutual assured destruction doctrine, which presumes that the sole objective of both sides is the prevention of nuclear warfare. This tends to be true of U.S. doctrine but is far less characteristic of Soviet doctrine, which assigns a much broader range of tasks to the nation's strategic nuclear forces in both peace and war. For sufficiency to be attainable, both sides must subscribe to the assured destruction doctrine. If either side is determined to deny the other an assured destruction capability, the other will find itself continually reaching for, but never being able to attain, the requisite level of forces. It will, instead, find itself racing for sufficiency with no less effort than if it were racing to obtain decisive superiority.

Second, aside from the practical limitations on attaining "sufficient" deterrent forces, the required level and composition of those forces is extremely difficult to determine. One must first outguess the enemy on what level of destruction he is willing to allow and then try to determine what sorts of force structure and weaponry are necessary to achieve the requisite destructive power. It behooves us to keep

in mind, incidentally, that the willingness of other nations to endure destruction may be quite different from our own. Russia, to cite the most relevant example, has historically demonstrated an awesome capacity to endure incredible destruction and huge losses, yet go on to fight, survive, and win. The Soviets, who suffered 20 million casualties in World War II and who witnessed the loss of 12 million additional countrymen at the hand of their own government during Stalin's regime, have a much different perception of violent conflict than Americans, who have never fought a modern war on their own soil and who regard the preservation and protection of human life as the highest duty of the state.

The American debate of strategic issues, even as late as the early seventies, centered almost exclusively around the assured destruction concept and its corollaries, primarily the notions of sufficiency and overkill. Deterrence through mutual assured destruction had become the orthodox faith, and its disciples usually argued only over how much of the federal budget ought to be spent on it and what kinds of weapons and force mix were necessary to achieve it. Not until the recent rethinking of U.S. strategy, fostered to a large degree by then Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, did the U.S. move away from its reliance on the assured destruction concept and broaden its doctrine and strategy to include such objectives as escalation control and U.S. survival in the event of war.

Under current doctrine, the principal goal of strategy remains deterrence of a nuclear war, but rather than rely on mutual assured destruction, current doctrine is based on the concept I shall call, at the risk of oversimplification, "assured response." Under assured destruction, nuclear war was virtually an all-or-nothing proposition. As long as the enemy did not exceed the requisite level of provocation, he could engage in any number of lesser political or military initiatives which, though they may have been very threatening or even damaging to the U.S. or her allies, might not be sufficient cause for launching a global nuclear war. How, for instance, was the U.S. to respond to a Warsaw Pact invasion of Western Europe if the Soviets were to launch an unlimited attack on our NATO allies but refrain from attacking the U.S.? Would the U.S. really come to the defense of her NATO allies if doing so meant triggering a global nuclear war and especially a war at the expense of her own population?

To cope with threats short of an all-out attack on the U.S., current doctrine calls for a range of options from very limited attacks with a small number of weapons to a full-scale war. By assuring the enemy that we can, and might, also respond to lesser military initiatives than a full-scale attack on the U.S., we can deter such initiatives without having to threaten initiating a holocaust. Besides deterring lower-order enemy initiatives, possession of a range of responses short of full-scale war may enable us to control the escalation of nuclear warfare in the event that it does break out. Although present doctrine concedes that nuclear war may be extremely difficult to control and may even escalate rapidly once started, such escalation is, at least, no longer automatic.

Finally, present doctrine establishes a commitment to maximizing the military, political, and economic capacity of the U.S. relative to the enemy, in the event that escalation cannot be controlled.[3] To what extent this constitutes victory or even national survival is open to debate, but it indicates that U.S. theorists are beginning to think in terms of attempting to provide some means of assuring U.S. survival or at least of limiting damage should war break out. Under the doomsday mentality of previous decades, such issues were seldom seriously discussed.

One must be careful, however, not to assume that the emergence of the current U.S. assured response doctrine represents the wholesale abandonment of the assured destruction doctrine. The latter concept is by no means dead, and there remain many who scoff

at the concepts of escalation control and national survival. Indeed, many people view the mere discussion of such concepts as morally reprehensible.

Speculation on the nature of nuclear warfare and its potential impact on international politics has never been popular in the United States. Herman Kahn's famous works in the early sixties, *On Thermonuclear War* and *Thinking about the Unthinkable,* were answered not by equally well-thought-out theoretical challenges but by a barrage of moral outrage that demonstrated just how unthinkable the subject really was to much of the American academic and political community, as well as to the general public. More recently, James Schlesinger's advocacy of a nuclear arms strategy allowing for limited and flexible counterforce as well as countervalue options in general nuclear warfare proved most unpopular in this country. The very notions that nuclear warfare is winnable, or that it may take any form other than instant, reciprocal annihilation are still held by most people to be preposterous. Scenarios for fighting, surviving, and achieving victory in various types of nuclear warfare have been discussed from time to time by a few military theorists and by students at the professional military schools but have rarely been employed as a basis for U.S. policy.[4] The direction of U.S. doctrine and strategy during the next decade cannot be predicted with certainty. Because our policy, doctrine, and strategy are created and adopted through a dynamic and essentially democratic process, our position at any given time will reflect the particular disposition of our political leadership, the impact of national and international events on the general mood of the country and, of course, the creativity of our strategic theorists, both military and civilian.

THE essential premises behind Soviet nuclear doctrine and strategy, and indeed the very processes by which they are created in the Soviet Union, are fundamentally different from their counterparts in the U.S. Unfortunately, too few Americans appreciate how the vast gulf between the national histories, ideologies, and political characters of the two nations has led to profoundly different perceptions of warfare and the role of military forces in the affairs of the state. The remainder of this article shall be devoted to a description of the fundamental differences between U.S. and Soviet nuclear thought and the implications that the latter holds for U.S. security. Effective military strategy cannot be formed in a vacuum. It must be designed with the opponent's intentions, perceptions, and capabilities in mind. It is, after all, the Soviets, not ourselves, that we are hoping to deter. A strategy aimed merely at the pacification of our own fears from our own perspective, or for the satisfaction of popular sentiment, can at best provide only an illusory feeling of security; at worst it invites disaster.

Soviet military doctrine and strategy, like their Western counterparts, have been designed to help lessen the likelihood of a general nuclear conflict. But Soviet doctrine and strategy reflect the essential differences between the Soviet and American political systems, ideologies, historical experiences, geographic positions, economic and technical capabilities, and differing perceptions of themselves and the world at large. Indeed, the entire Soviet approach to the formation of military doctrine and strategy is fundamentally different from the approach in the West. For example, while American strategy has been aimed at maintaining the present world order, the Soviets have stated time and again their ideological commitment to altering rather than preserving the status quo. The Soviets see world affairs as a dynamic system that neither can nor should be held perpetually in its present state. Military strategy, as they see it, should be tailored to an inherently changing rather than a static world.

To assume that Soviet doctrine has emerged through a process similar to that in the U.S. or that it is constructed along parallel lines but has merely reached different conclusions because the objectives of the two systems are different is to make the error of trying to analyze the characteristics of another culture using the perspectives and yardsticks appropriate for, but peculiar to, one's own. Soviet military thought, revealed in doctrine and strategy, is a creature different from its American counterpart not only in color, size, and shape, but in its basic anatomy and physiology. It must be explored within the context of its own origin and environment.

In examining Soviet military literature, the Western reader is immediately struck by a number of features not present in American military writing. The first of these is the persistent claim of Soviet writers that Soviet military concepts proceed from a scientific basis, founded on irrevocable principles about which there can be no debate or argument. This scientific basis is Marxism-Leninism, which in the Soviet view provides the framework of analysis for all social phenomena. Military doctrine, according to Marxism-Leninism, is a class phenomenon, springing ultimately, as all other social phenomena do, from the economic conditions of the society. Although the Soviets also recognize the impact of political, geographic, and demographic factors, they reject the notion that military doctrine can be deliberately formulated through an intellectual, cognitive approach. In the volume *Military Strategy,* which was compiled in 1960 by a group of military scholars headed by Marshal V. D. Sokolovsky and which still serves as one of the chief explications of the basic premises of Soviet strategy and doctrine, the following explanation is given of the nature of military doctrine:

> Military doctrine is not thought out or compiled by a single person or group of persons; it comes out of the vital activities of the state as a whole, and is the result of a quite complex and lengthy historical process of the creation and development of official ideas: . . . There can be no single military doctrine for all states, since the general political line of the state's ruling class and the economic and moral resources at its disposal determine military doctrine.[5]

In contrast to what is often assumed in the U.S., the Soviets do not believe that there are any universally applicable schemes for achieving strategic stability. There are, therefore, no attempts made in Soviet literature to divine such a scheme.

Although the Soviets reject the notion that *doctrine* can be produced by a cognitive process, or that any doctrine can be generally applicable to all states, strategy and tactics are the subjects of intense intellectual scrutiny by military scholars in the Soviet Union. Military strategy is defined, as in the West, as occupying a subordinate role to doctrine. Military doctrine is said to determine general positions and principles, whereas military strategy deals with concrete problems of the actual deployment of military forces in the preparation for war and the conduct of war.[6]

Another unique feature of Soviet military thought is the very limited role of debate in the open literature. Consistent with their view that doctrine cannot be developed through a deliberate academic approach, there is no discussion of alternative doctrines or the relative merits of each. Moreover, only a very few dissertations on strategic and tactical concepts are deemed suitable for open publication. To the outside observer, there is little evidence of debate. This does not reflect any monolithic unity of thought, as the Soviets are given to claiming; rather, Soviet strategic concepts are ultimately formulated only by high-ranking members of the Soviet politico-military establishment. Soviet publications on strategy and tactics do not represent contributions to a freewheeling interchange of scholarly opinions and differences but could more appropriately be characterized as statements of the accepted, official position arrived at by consensus within

the higher political and military circles. If questions of strategy are ever treated by groups of scholars, such groups are generally under the central control of some leading personality, as was the committee which, under Sokolovsky's guidance, compiled *Military Strategy*. Statements of Soviet doctrine and policy are the outcome of official efforts to identify the military concepts and measures best suited to achieving the political objectives of the state.

The role of Marxism-Leninism in the formulation of military doctrine and strategy is difficult to assess—just as it is difficult to assess its role in domestic or foreign policy or any of the other activities of the Soviet government. That it does impact on Soviet policy and decisions cannot be denied. Marxism-Leninism does give Soviet leaders a framework within which to evaluate world events. It also provides broad prescriptions for dealing with various political and military problems.

Because it is a sociopolitical rather than a military theory, Marxism-Leninism provides no direct guidance for Soviet military strategy and tactics; but it does serve as the foundation for a de facto Soviet military doctrine. It establishes the need for armed forces, the politically acceptable modes of warfare, and other general rules governing the role that the military may play in the affairs of the state. From the dissertations of Marx and Lenin, Soviet leaders obtain theories and arguments necessary to explain, justify, rationalize, and legitimize their policies and to interpret and act on world events.

War itself is seen as a manifestation of the class struggle. Soviet leaders assert that although the Soviet Union, being a socialist state, is inherently peaceful and would never initiate a war, it must be prepared for conflict with the hostile and inherently warlike imperialist nations of the capitalist camp. Furthermore, because of the nature of class warfare, there can be no coming to terms with the enemy. One does not compromise with a class enemy. As long as the capitalist camp endures, it will continue in its aspirations to destroy the socialist camp. A formidable peacetime deterrent is therefore a necessity. In order for the socialist world to achieve lasting victory in the event of a large-scale conflict with the capitalist world, the latter system must ultimately be dismantled and a new social order established in its stead. From this ideological imperative springs the doctrinal requirement, in the event of war, for "complete defeat of the enemies' armed forces," the invasion and holding of his territory, and "eternal vigilance" in the protection of Soviet territory against invasion.[7] For any nation to have such a capability, it must not have merely "sufficient" or even "balanced" forces but decidedly superior forces. This is the essence of Soviet doctrine.

The determination of Soviet leaders to have a free hand in implementing peacetime foreign policy goals provides further impetus for advocating superior strategic capability. Firm believers that a nation's ultimate peacetime prerogatives depend on its relative military capability, Soviet leaders are committed to acquiring a military force that will allow them maximum freedom from coercion or interference by other nations in prosecuting their foreign policy. The Soviet experience during the Cuban missile crisis of the early sixties was a profound lesson, and the almost immediate subsequent acceleration of Soviet arms buildup was evidence of their resolve that never again would they allow themselves to be put in a position in which they would have to back down in the face of an ultimatum from a superior military power.

Marshal A. A. Grechko, in his important monograph *On Guard over the Peace and the Building of Communism,* published in 1971, justified Soviet military efforts in characteristic Soviet terms:

> In the USSR and the other Socialist nations there are no social groups interested in a war, and indeed, they could not be. L. I. Brezhnev said at the Twenty-fourth Congress: "we have territorial

> claims on no one whatsoever. We are in favor of the free and independent development of all peoples. But let no one try to talk to us in the language of ultimatums and force."[8]

Soviet strategy for the employment of nuclear forces, then, consists of two dicta. The first calls for a military force capable of deterring potential enemies from the use of nuclear weapons during peacetime and, in the event such deterrence fails, surviving the war and going on to defeat the enemy. The second calls for a military force of sufficient strength to prevent other nations, including other nuclear powers, from limiting Soviet peacetime prerogatives through the use of force or the threat of force. Current U.S. policy, I believe, has more limited objectives. Rather than defeat of the enemy, U.S. policy has emphasized control of the conflict. Second, although the U.S. also seeks to deter the use or threat of use of nuclear and conventional forces against itself and its allies, the U.S. is not seeking the same broad freedom of action that the Soviet Union hopes to achieve under its expanding nuclear umbrella.

One should also keep in mind that even though U.S. defense spokesmen may from time to time speak in terms of "escalation control," "U.S. survival," and other terms associated with current doctrine, the nation's commitment to that doctrine is not absolute. There are many in Congress, the executive, and the public at large who do not believe that nuclear war is winnable, controllable, or even survivable. Previous commitments to conflict escalation control and counterforce options are being constantly re-examined. As the debate over appropriate national strategic options continues, appeals to the persistent notions of assured destruction, massive retaliation, balance of terror, sufficiency, and overkill, are continually made by members of Congress as well as the academic community and the popular media. The dearth of serious references to the possibilities of realizing a U.S. war-winning or survival capability is evidence that the historical preoccupation solely with the deterrent mission of U.S. nuclear forces continues to stifle discussion of policy measures that could help to preserve the United States or U.S. interests in the event of a nuclear conflict. Recent warnings about expanding Soviet civil defense capabilities have sparked little interest in the U.S., which presently has no meaningful civil defense program largely because no one believes it can do any good. Much of the debate over the MX and B–1 has been disappointingly unsophisticated, proceeding too often from the assumption that such weapons will be employed only as a means of futile retaliation by an already dead or dying nation. Because of the unpopularity of discussing any aspect of nuclear war other than its deterrence, U.S. theorists have barely begun to explore scenarios for prosecuting nuclear war, surviving it, or winning it. Nor have we even made many serious attempts even to define what might constitute survival or victory.

The acceptance or rejection of such scenarios as a basis for policy, of course, is the prerogative of the political leadership of the nation, who must reconcile the strategic options with the nation's political constraints and objectives. But it is, indeed, unfortunate that U.S. theorists have not been more active, more objective, and more academically courageous in providing political decision-makers with a greater data base and a more candid analysis of contemporary issues for their use in policy-making. In what follows, I shall offer a comparative analysis of American and Soviet strategic theory and shall conclude by examining some strategic options open to the U.S.—not as policy proposals, for that is outside my purview—but to help illuminate some of the compelling, though disquieting, strategic issues of the coming decade.

TO Western readers, accustomed to thinking of nuclear warfare as a synonym for

the inevitable and immediate destruction of humanity, any discussion of victory and the various means of achieving it seems moot. But in this field of discussion, largely unexplored by Western theoreticians, Soviet military theorists have produced some impressive works addressing contingencies for war as well as peace. While Western strategic theory is often preoccupied with the preservation of peace, Soviet writing contains extensive discussions on every problematical level of nuclear warfare from national strategy to the most minute aspects of civil defense and battlefield tactics.

In 1970, Marshal A. A. Sidorenko published his book *The Offensive*, which deals at considerable length with the tactical problems of nuclear warfare in land theaters. In this and other works, Soviet theorists have explored an impressive array of theoretical topics from the problems of targeting nuclear weapons to moving infantry through areas undergoing nuclear attack.

The mere fact that Soviet discussion of battlefield tactics in land nuclear warfare is occurring is evidence of their conviction that there exists an important role for ground troops and army units in nuclear war; indeed, tactical and theater employment of nuclear weapons receives as much or more attention in Soviet writings as strategic nuclear employment. The popular conception in the West, on the other hand, is that ground units will be of little use once the planet is blown to bits. But Soviet theorists have been more sympathetic toward the views of Herman Kahn than of Nevil Shute. The fastidious attention that the Soviets have paid to the theory of ground operations in nuclear warfare can be attributed first to the Soviet doctrinal requirement for victory by seizure and occupation of enemy territory and second to the historical importance of ground warfare in Soviet military experience.

Throughout their entire history, war to the peoples living on the exposed plains of Western and Central Asia has meant land warfare. Over the last two millennia, the Russian people have been continually invaded by armies sweeping in from both the East and West. Because of the extreme exposure of the Russian and Soviet states to invasion by the armies of Europe and East Asia, large, well-equipped, and highly mobile standing armies have always been of crucial importance in guaranteeing the security of the nation.

The geographical position of the U.S.S.R. has given it a far different perspective from the U.S., which, in contrast, has always been buttressed against invasion by two oceans. Until the advent of intercontinental bombers and missiles, the U.S. relied almost exclusively on the navy as her means of protection against invasion. The Soviet Union, unlike the U.S., has constantly had to prepare for the possibility of land invasion and has fought both of the major wars of this century on her own soil. To the Soviets, the possibility of any enemy attempting a full-scale invasion subsequent to a massive nuclear attack on her military bases and centers of government, industry, and population has been more than mere academic speculation.

Furthermore, the Soviet Union has traditionally faced a much larger number of potential enemies both across the seas and directly on her borders. Today, not only the U.S. but Western Europe, China, Japan, and possibly India are all perceived as potential enemies; and it should be noted that most of them have at one time or another invaded or attempted an invasion of the Russian or Soviet states. Soviet strategy in the nuclear era, as well as in the past, has had to be designed to cope with a considerably wider variety of threats and possible scenarios of war than has U.S. strategy.

To deter potential attackers, Soviet strategists have advocated a combined conventional and nuclear force superior in strength to any potential enemy or likely combination of enemy forces. Marshal Grechko, in his previously

mentioned pamphlet on Soviet military strategy and doctrine, declared:

> In order to be completely prepared for . . . [future war], it is essential to constantly follow Lenin's thesis that in war the victorious side will be the one which possesses *superiority* in the economic, scientific, technical, socio-political, morale, and military areas. This superiority finds itself concentrated primarily in the army, in its definite socio-political type and combat capabilities.[9]

Superiority in nuclear as well as other types of military capability and the possession of a strong standing army are seen as essential aspects of Soviet strategy. Possession of such a force not only provides an effective deterrent against aggression but as Soviet officials have often stated provides "those conditions under which politics is in a position to achieve the aims it sets for itself."[10]

Should peacetime deterrence fail, however, and the Soviet Union be drawn into nuclear war, or should she opt for nuclear war in order to protect what she deems a vital interest, Soviet strategy has also been designed to meet the doctrinal mandate that the Soviet Union survive and retain the capability to crush the enemy forces and consummate its victory by invading and occupying the enemy's territory.

Standing superiority in nuclear forces, which is in the opinion of the author the cornerstone of Soviet strategy, would enhance the potential for survival of the Soviet Union by allowing it to destroy an increased amount of the enemy's offensive capability during an initial exchange of nuclear weapons. Force superiority would also allow the U.S.S.R. to respond to a combined attack by a number of enemy nations acting in concert, and to deter nonbelligerent nuclear powers that may consider intervening in the exchange or threatened exchange of strategic weapons with another nation. The architects of U.S. strategy have traditionally presumed that nuclear war would be waged against a single powerful enemy: the Soviet Union. Though this premise may be valid for U.S. strategy, the Soviets have been compelled to contend with other possibilities. The Soviet Union has a number of potential enemies within short and medium ballistic missile range, and the possibility of having to deter or fight a number of enemies at the same time is keenly felt by Soviet planners. Furthermore, the Soviet Union, unlike the U.S., faces potential enemies on her perimeter capable of invading her either as a follow-up to a nuclear attack or coincident with a nuclear barrage launched by another nation.

Soviet strategy further differs from Western strategy in that it proceeds from a fundamentally different concept of the nature of nuclear warfare. As previously mentioned, the Soviets see an extensive role for ground troops even in general nuclear war. The popular Western concept of nuclear warfare has generally been one involving a convulsive or spasmodic exchange of weapons, after which both nations will lie prostrate and incapable of deploying traditional invasion forces and land armies. Although an exchange between the Soviet Union and the U.S. could possibly follow such a scenario, one must keep in mind that the goal of Soviet planners and strategists is to ensure that the U.S.S.R., at least, will never find itself in such a position. Furthermore, aside from the threat posed by the U.S., Soviet planners must also consider the possibility of nuclear warfare between themselves and peripheral nations on the Eurasian landmass. Since the final victory, in the Soviet view, will go to the nation that eventually seizes and occupies the other's territory, Soviet strategy also calls for the maintenance of large standing armies, highly mobile, possessing great firepower, and capable of seizing the initiative and achieving large territorial gains in the ground war before, during, and subsequent to the exchange of long-range weapons.[11]

The Soviets apparently see nuclear weapons not so much as having introduced a fundamental change in the nature of war but rather as having merely extended warfare to more vio-

lent proportions—a process that has been observed and discussed by military theorists ever since Clausewitz wrote about it in *On War* nearly a century and a half ago. The first two chapters of Sidorenko's *The Offensive* are devoted to a Clausewitzian analysis of the evolution of twentieth-century warfare toward increasing levels of violence and destruction and the role that nuclear weapons play as the most recent addition to the technology of mass destruction. Sidorenko's thesis is that nuclear weapons in both a tactical and strategic sense have reduced the distinction between the front and rear lines of the enemy forces; and that by giving the attacker the capability of quickly and decisively penetrating huge areas of the enemy's positional defenses, nuclear weapons have extended the tactical and strategic advantage of the offensive. Modern large-scale ground warfare has, therefore, become more than ever before a contest of maneuver and initiative rather than of attrition.[12] An important corollary to this thesis is that although a general war employing nuclear weapons will be much more destructive than any previous war, it will proceed along analogous lines. Instead of launching long-range attacks on enemy cities by using waves of conventional bombers, as in the last war, it will now be done by ballistic missiles; and instead of long-range artillery and conventional air support in the battlefield, armies will now employ nuclear artillery and jet aircraft delivering tactical nuclear weapons in support of highly mobile ground operations. World War III, in the Soviet view, will be much like World War II—only bigger, faster, and more destructive.

There is nothing in this conception of warfare which dictates that the levels of destruction in warfare be absolute or even the maximum attainable. Indeed, a nation facing an assortment of potential enemies would be well advised to deploy its forces as economically as possible, using only those required to secure victory rather than throwing them all away at the initiation of hostilities in an attempt to annihilate the other belligerent merely for the sake of annihilating him, or of making good one's previous threats.

Furthermore, if the realization of certain political goals or military objectives requires the preservation of given economic or military resources and government or population centers, the deployment of nuclear forces should be limited accordingly. Nuclear war, as Sidorenko sees it, will basically resemble previous modern wars but will simply be fought using more concentrated firepower and faster delivery systems.

To many Westerners this concept of nuclear warfare seems at least surprising, if not absurd. American doctrine and strategy, by traditionally relying on deterrence through terror, has conditioned most Americans to think of nuclear weapons only as instruments of total annihilation. The perception of nuclear strategy held by most of the public and adhered to by many national leaders remains rooted in the belief that the only object of nuclear war is indiscriminate, unrestrained, and absolute destruction. So long as this belief persists, U.S. policy will often be influenced to varying degrees by the old mutual assured destruction concept and could during such times forswear many military options and force structures that could help to assure U.S. survival and victory in the event of hostilities. More important, a persistent faith in mutual assured destruction by its advocates would continue to justify the sufficiency argument. Should this argument prevail in the coming debates on force structure and weapons procurement, the U.S. could find itself possessed of a force of only tenuous deterrent capability, abdicating all but the faintest hope for U.S. survival in a general nuclear war, and incapable of precluding future Soviet political initiatives that may jeopardize U.S. interests. Ironically enough, should the sufficiency notion ever become the basis for U.S. strategy while the Soviets press for superiority, it would become increasingly likely that in the advent of nuclear war between the

two powers, the U.S. could suffer the kind of Armageddon-like destruction currently envisioned by those who advocate this concept.

A more subtle but equally sobering aspect of the popular American conception of nuclear warfare as mutual suicide is the widely held confidence that the validity of that concept is self-evident to the rest of the world—including the Soviets. The typical American is unaware that the Soviet concept of nuclear warfare is profoundly different from ours. Which of the two concepts is the more valid can ultimately be determined only in the unfortunate event that nuclear warfare between the two nations someday occurs. In the meantime, however, for purposes of political decision-making and diplomatic intercourse, what matters is not whether the Soviet concept of warfare is more accurate than the popular Western concept but that the Soviets believe it is. The strategy they adopt and the subsequent agreements and commitments they will be willing to enter into with the West will all be significantly influenced by their view of warfare. American policy-makers and planners must not lose sight of the fact that some Soviet strategists continue to view nuclear warfare in more traditional strategic and tactical terms and are committed to the position that national security and other lesser objectives in both peace and war are best attained through the possession of decidedly superior force—both nuclear and conventional.

American negotiators, policy-makers, and strategists must also keep in mind that the international political and geographical position of the Soviet Union dictates some strategic requirements not shared by the U.S., which the Soviet Union cannot and will not ignore. While U.S. and NATO strategy has primarily been formulated to counter only the Soviet threat, Soviet nuclear strategy is designed to cope with a multitude of threats from nuclear and nonnuclear powers alike. Although Soviet doctrine on nuclear forces may be espoused in Marxist-Leninist phraseology establishing the need for nuclear forces on the grounds of the threat posed by imperialist and capitalist adversaries, Soviet strategists have never overlooked the possibility of war against China or a coalition of a number of other states. In recent years it has become apparent that the conflict between Moscow and Peking is genuine. The Twenty-fourth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party went so far as to state explicitly that although the Communist Party of the Soviet Union "sought to aid . . . in the normalization of relations, and to restore friendship with Chinese People's Republic," the "CPSU would *never make concessions to the national interest of the Soviet State*, of the principles of Marxism-Leninism."[13]

The rapid buildup of the Soviet stockpile of strategic weapons in the 1960s can be attributed to the need which the Soviet Union felt not only to reduce America's superiority but to establish unmistakable superiority over China's nascent nuclear power. Adam B. Ulam argues that it was to offset the future Chinese threat that the Soviets erected their ABM system to protect their capital and other sites. By purely technical criteria, it makes little sense to install an ABM system; for all its huge expense, it offers no protection against a first-rate atomic power, such as the United States. But, as Ulam suggests, the Kremlin was not thinking of a large nuclear power when it erected its ABM system. With the great degree of centralization that characterizes their political system, the Soviets have to take account of the threat and potential effect of *one* bomb or missile striking Moscow.[14]

Flanked by potential enemies on both sides, the Soviets have had to anticipate the possibility that war with one might precipitate an attack by the other, either from political commitment or a desire to exploit an opportunity for easy victory. With the easing of relations between the U.S. and mainland China in the last few years, Soviet strategists have had to take increasing account of the possible actions that the U.S. may take should the Soviet

Union ever become embroiled in open hostilities, including nuclear warfare, with China. To provide assurance that the U.S. would stay out of a Sino-Soviet conflict, particularly if such a conflict were to escalate to nuclear war, the Soviet Union would have to engage a portion of her forces against one nation but still have sufficient reserve left to deter the other. The U.S. does not have to cope with this type of strategic problem to anywhere near the same degree.

The possibility of having to conduct a multifront or multilateral war is further complicated by the antagonistic relationship that exists between the Soviet Union and her manifestly resentful and reluctant satellites in Eastern Europe. The specter of having to hold the forces of revolution within her allies at bay after suffering a nuclear attack herself, or while engaged in war on another front, provides tremendous impetus for maintaining both her huge forward-based standing army and a nuclear umbrella against outside nuclear powers who may be sympathetic with the Eastern European countries.

Finally, Soviet strategy reflects concern over the eventual rise of China and conceivably other nations to nuclear power status. Certainly China will possess a viable nuclear delivery capability against the Soviet Union several years before she will pose a commensurate threat to the United States. Of Soviet concern also is the possibility that India, Japan, or Germany may someday acquire substantial nuclear arsenals of their own. The Soviets have been, and remain, much more apprehensive than the U.S. has traditionally been over the possibility of two or more nuclear powers teaming up against them. The forces of both historical experience and Marxist ideology have not served to ameliorate Soviet apprehension about the intentions and aspirations of many of the nations in the outside world, both in the East and the West. Again, whether such a perception of the world is realistic is not the relevant question for Western analysts of Soviet strategy. The important question is whether the Soviets do, in fact, perceive the world with such apprehension and how this apprehension impacts on their military posture and political behavior.

Although Western analysts of the Soviet Union may have overplayed the themes of traditional Russian xenophobia and Bolshevik suspicion of the outside world, the Soviets have always exhibited a cautious approach to world politics and military strategy. They have historically prepared for a broad set of contingencies in peace and war, and have generally made concessions in international politics only when coerced or limited by an opponent of superior military or political strength. What implications, then, does Soviet strategy have for Western security at the present time and during the forthcoming SALT discussions with the U.S.?

It is the author's contention that since Soviet strategy is designed to provide both a deterrent and a war-winning capability and ensure a peacetime environment in which the political objectives of the Soviet Union can be freely pursued, it seems doubtful that the Soviet Union will opt for any military posture short of superiority over any of its potential enemies. I believe that the historical, ideological, and strategic imperatives behind Soviet military planning make it difficult for the Soviet Union to feel secure with anything less than a strategically superior nuclear force. These imperatives include her perceived need to prepare for multilateral conflict with other nations or coalitions of nations on and off the Eurasian landmass. It seems doubtful to me, therefore, that the U.S. can expect the Soviet Union to make substantial concessions in arms limitations under the SALT agreements or any subsequent discussions. The Soviets will continue to build a diversified mixture of forces including land-based and sea-based missiles, and their interest in refining the accuracy of their delivery vehicles and developing a MIRV capability is not likely to wane.[15] Soviet strat-

egy, especially in the face of growing rapprochement between the U.S. and China, is almost certain to remain one of emphasis on long-range nuclear weapons, backed up with vast standing ground forces capable of rapid deployment on both the European and Asian fronts.

IN coping with the Soviet nuclear threat, the U.S. can, of course, pursue any number of options. There are, however, given the force of recent history and the impact of current events, three options particularly worth examining. A comparative examination of them could be the most valuable academic exercise possible in an article of this length.

The first of these options is for the U.S. to return to reliance on the assured destruction concept. Since it is unlikely that the Soviets will ever agree to such a doctrine, there would be little about it that would be mutual, and the U.S. would have to identify and strive for some sort of sufficient force structure in the face of Soviet superiority. Second, the U.S. could attempt a traditional balance-of-power approach by establishing an entente among the various blocks of world powers, balancing them in a series of alliances in hopes of achieving a stable world order. Under such a system, the deterrent for war would rest not so much on the nuclear capabilities of any one nation, but on a system of interconnected alliances designed to ensure, by collective agreements, the security of all nations against any one belligerent power. Third, the U.S. could opt for a powerful nuclear and conventional strategic strike force, protected from and designed primarily to neutralize Soviet offensive and conventional forces at the onset of a military conflict. By being able to deny the Soviet Union her sought-after force superiority, the U.S. could achieve both an effective deterrent and a force capable of ensuring both national survival and the protection of U.S. interests in the subsequent phases of the conflict.

The first option of unilaterally returning to assured destruction as a deterrent would amount to little more than clinging to false hopes. Since the Soviets lend little credence to the notions of assured destruction and sufficiency, it is unlikely that U.S. policy based on these concepts could give us the sort of security we have had in the past or would have hoped for in the future. These two notions gained force and acceptance in the U.S. during the first two decades after World War II when the U.S., in fact, enjoyed the kind of superiority over the U.S.S.R. that the Soviets are now attempting to establish over the U.S. It has been only in the last few years that Soviet nuclear strength has begun to approach our own. Ironically, the peace and stability of the postwar period can be more readily accounted for by U.S. superiority during those decades than by the presumed validity of the U.S. doctrine of mutual assured destruction. With the Soviet Union, I believe, now pressing for superiority, U.S. reliance on assured destruction as a means of achieving international stability has little future. Indeed, the U.S. military capacity for an assured destruction capability against the Soviet Union is one of the very things which I believe the Soviets intend to eliminate in their pursuit of superiority. Soviet-sponsored exploits in Africa and the growing uneasiness in Western Europe are but the faint rumblings of things to come in the future of emerging Soviet pre-eminence as the Soviet Union begins to test U.S. resolve under the changing strategic balance.

As for the second option, balance-of-power politics is a time-honored method of establishing a peaceful world order. Efforts begun by Henry Kissinger during the Nixon administration to establish a détente through a balanced system of world power raised some hopes that a permanent solution had been found to the problem of international stability. Détente, however, has always traveled a very rocky road, and the success of such a system in the

future would be dependent on the continuing improvement of U.S.–Chinese relations, the continued confidence of Japan and our NATO allies in our commitment to their interests, and Soviet agreement in the upcoming SALT discussions to substantially limit her buildup of military forces. But even if we could be sure of maintaining all of these requisite ifs, there are some less obvious but even more serious shortcomings to any international order based on a balance of power.

As long as the balance is maintained by careful and skillful statesmanship, the system can be an effective instrument in preventing international conflict. But if allowed to break down, it can rapidly polarize into a perverse assemblage of separate and arbitrarily antagonistic blocks, as did the European system on the eve of the First World War. The congealment of the European system at the turn of the century into the opposing Triple Entente and Triple Alliance can be traced to the fall from office of Germany's Bismarck and England's Lansdowne, who throughout the late nineteenth century had adroitly balanced the military and political power of England, France, Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary against one another.[16] Whether the U.S. is capable of similar statesmanship and how long it could sustain it would be important questions for the future should the U.S. ever opt for this course.

But the final and most serious indictment of the two courses just discussed is that, in my opinion, neither provides any incentive for the Soviets to forswear their military doctrine of assured survival and preparedness for war, nor to scrap their strategy of eventually achieving nuclear superiority. U.S. negotiators must recognize that the Soviets are committed to achieving superiority and that it is not likely that they will accept a position of inferiority or even parity with the West. If the U.S. hopes to persuade the Soviet Union to stop increasing its stockpile and improving its nuclear delivery capability, it will probably have to allow the Soviet Union to cease doing so at a position of discernible superiority to Western nuclear capability. Whether the U.S. could, under those circumstances, ensure its own safety and the stability of the world political order would then depend primarily on the success of U.S. diplomacy.

The third option calls for retaining our present diplomatic ties and the concomitant commitments of conventional forces to NATO and East Asia but emphasizing in U.S. strategic posture a flexible counterforce capability against Soviet nuclear and conventional forces. Such a strategic force would have considerable deterrent value and would have the added benefit of helping to ensure U.S. survival and continued military strength in the event that war actually does occur. Furthermore, such a posture has the welcome attribute of being best achieved by improving the control and increasing the accuracy, selectivity, speed, and invulnerability of our strategic forces more than by simply adding megatonnage or increasing the number of weapons. Moreover, a strong counterforce commitment is far more morally and politically defensible than the traditional countervalue concept. While making the prospect of war no more inviting to the potential aggressor, it provides neither side with any incentive to target the others' civilian populations. In fact, such a strategy forces both sides to commit what weapons they have to the others' offensive forces rather than squandering them on civilian targets. One need only recall that the decisive factor in Nazi Germany's failure to overwhelm British air power in the Battle of Britain was Göring's decision to deploy German bombers against London instead of British airfields and radar installations in order to appreciate the imprudence of misdirecting one's ultimately limited offensive resources.[17]

Finally, the most compelling argument of all is that a decisive counterforce capability, which allows one to deny the enemy his sought-for superiority, is the most effective strategy

against an enemy who bases his strategy on force superiority. The only real way to deter such an enemy is to deny or be able to deny him at the outbreak of war precisely the advantage that he deems necessary to ensure his success and survival.

THE preceding discussion is not intended to be construed as a comprehensive list of the strategic options open to the U.S., nor is the third option professed to be the only possible means of achieving our national goals of peacetime deterrence and of conflict limitation and survival in the event of war. The implications, however, should be clear. In the face of Soviet goals of acquiring a force that can fight, survive, and win a nuclear war, and given the present momentum of the Soviet military buildup, U.S. theorists and strategists will have to face up to the task, however unfashionable it may have been in the past, of designing and proposing scenarios for not only deterring but for countering, controlling, fighting, surviving, and winning against the enemy in the event of nuclear war. Policy-makers and leaders, both civilian and military, will have to boldly confront the task of honest, courageous, and dispassionate discussion of these same topics.

However catastrophic nuclear war may be, the world may someday witness it; and if we fail in the meantime to rationally and objectively discuss not only the deterrence of nuclear war but the problems of its prosecution as well, its unfortunate eventuality will be all the more terrifying and tragic. To study the prosecution of warfare no more implies a desire to perpetrate it than the study of disease implies a desire to promote an epidemic. Indeed, it is our prior study of both warfare and disease that will enable us best to cope with the cataclysm or the epidemic, when and if they come. And if nuclear warfare is potentially the greatest tragedy that may yet befall the human race, ought it not receive the tireless attention of our best minds?

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**Notes**

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