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Nuclear Deterrence: The Rational and the Political

Abstract: While it is often argued that U.S. military strategy has gone through substantial changes over the past three decades, it is not so clear if this is so, or why this should be so. Some changes in the real strategic problem of the west must be considered, including the growth of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. Changes in our perception of the problem may be at least as important, however, amid some possibilities of 'Finlandisation'. Changes in the West's opportunities must also be considered, including 'limited nuclear war', and a totally conventional defense. Finally to be considered are the bureaucratic motivations of those advocating any such changes in western military postures, all of which suggest that current policies may still be better than the alternatives.

It is often said that United States strategy with regard to the applications of possible use of nuclear weapons has gone through some kind of massive evolution over the past four decades, rather than staying constant.¹ Is this so, or would it be more accurate to conclude that the changes have really been small, compared to the enduring attributes of such strategy?

If there have indeed been changes, what could explain them? Are changes to be regarded mainly as rational responses to shifts in the objective problem the United States faces, in protecting its own territory and that of its most valued allies? Or are such changes somehow less 'rational', and more 'political', reflecting the subjective feelings of the publics that matter on either side of the Atlantic, or the special interests and preferences of participants in the decision process?

This article will attempt to sort out the nature of the strategy changes that have occurred, and the importance of these changes as compared with what has not been altered. We will consider alternative theories of what could explain such change, contrasting what would seem like more purposeful or rational decision-making, with what would be seen as more subjective and political.

Has there indeed been some kind of major shift, from an American commitment to a 'massive retaliation' hitting of cities and civilian targets in the event of a nuclear war (in the 'assured destruction' of what later become enshrined as mutual assured destruction - MAD), to something more calculatedly intended to strike at the other side's military capabilities rather than value items, the supposed result of the integration of nuclear-targeting plans in the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP)? Allegedly, there has been a further refinement of nuclear targeting planning in the PD-59 study done during the Carter Administration, and then still more with NSDD-13 in the Reagan-Administration², but what has this entire progression then consisted of? Critics of such alleged shifts in nuclear targeting would argue that the cities of Europe and Russia and North America will be destroyed in any event, as the damage in the collateral side-effects of any use of nuclear weapons today will probably be just as bad as when such weapons were aimed directly at cities.³

Changes In the Real Problem?

One form of explanation for any change that is alleged to have occurred would stress the growth in Soviet nuclear forces over the decades, a growth which has markedly changed the ratios of the nuclear destructive power controlled by the two major alliances. In 1948, the United States possessed all the nuclear weapons of the world, so that its ratio here with the U.S.S.R. had to be infinite. After the Soviets showed their first nuclear weapons in 1949, this ratio could never be the same again (unless Washington found some marvelously effective way of preempting and destroying all the Soviet strategic forces in a U.S. counterforce first strike).

In subsequent years, the U.S.S.R. is then often described as having moved forward to a position of 'parity', and then of 'superiority' where its position in 1950 or 1955 was allegedly still one of 'inferiority'. But which are the meaningful turning points here? Is there anything that is so relevant about a phrase like superiority or inferiority, once a monopoly of nuclear weaponry has been replaced by a duopoly?

Henry Kissinger wrote a best-selling book entitled Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy in 1957, some thirty years ago, arguing that the United States could no longer rely on massive retaliation threats against Soviet cities, as the way of keeping Soviet conventional forces from sweeping across western Europe; for Soviet nuclear forces could now devastate U.S. cities in retaliation (Kissinger 1957). Kissinger did not bother to attribute any 'parity' to the Soviet nuclear strategic forces in the comparison with those of the United States. The important factor was instead simply that American cities were vulnerable, and even a ten to one ratio of U.S. to

Soviet nuclear strength would not have shielded such American cities against total devastation.

Kissinger warned, if we were to head off a Soviet attack on the NATO countries in Europe, that some plausible western response was needed which might blunt a Soviet advance without escalating to any kind of nuclear destruction of Moscow and other Soviet cities. The capability for such a response has never been deployed, but the Soviet ground force attack on West Germany has not come. If Kissinger was telling us thirty years ago that the door was wide open for Soviet aggression, and such aggression has not occurred, could it be that his analysis was wrong?

In any event, Henry Kissinger's analysis was that the problem of the credibility of extended deterrence, the problem of reassuring freedom west of the Elbe River, was already at hand, with no further augmentations of Soviet military power really being needed to pose the risk. If he later was to base his assessment of risk on the growth of the Soviet arsenal (Kissinger 1979), his earlier work does not lay the logical groundwork for this.

Perhaps our intuitions, carrying over from earlier periods of conventional warfare, still suggest that a Soviet nuclear force 20% bigger than ours would count for more than a force 20% smaller. But the realities of mutual deterrence have always had to challenge such earlier intuitions. The real yardstick of comparison has had to be, ever since 1949, the number of opposing nuclear warheads that could reach our cities. Once a significant number of American cities were vulnerable to this kind of attack, doubts could immediately be raised, quite logically and rationally, as to whether the United States could in any way apply nuclear weapons to the shielding of its friends and allies on the continent of Europe.⁴ But, given that such rational doubts have been raised, some answers have nonetheless been found, so that Soviet planners can by no means count on exploiting the conventional warfare advantages their numbers and geographical position offer them.

Those who worry about the totals of nuclear forces on each side sometimes portray the evolution of the relationship as follows:

American monopoly
 American superiority
 parity
 Soviet superiority . . .

If the analyst is not careful about thinking through the realities, he might then be led to see a pendulum motion here, leading to . . .

Soviet monopoly !!

There are two important points to be made here, in any rational analysis of the situation. The first is that monopoly for the Soviets, or for either side, is now unattainable. Moscow will never be as secure against nuclear attack, in the event of a war in Europe, as Washington was in 1948.

The second point is that the loss of such a monopoly was indeed the most important of all the changes in nuclear situation. The difference between superiority, for either side, and parity, is terribly minor, when compared with this elementary difference between monopoly and even the beginnings of nuclear duopoly. Our problems of nuclear strategy, of making American responses credible so that Europe would not be prone to Soviet military conquest (and so that European economic resources would not be drained away by preparations for a conventional defense), thus began in 1949 with the first Soviet acquisition of nuclear warheads. It is truly debatable whether the problem has changed since then, or whether the solutions have changed.

Looking at the western security problem in a rational way, therefore, in terms of the requirements of defense, it is hardly clear that changes have been required, or that our problems are worse today than two decades ago.

Changes In the Perceived Problem?

If the rational case for a shift in strategy, in face of the growth of Soviet nuclear forces, is not so overpowering, there may nonetheless be some political cases to be made, as long as any ordinary Americans or Europeans continue to be influenced by any of the earlier intuitions in which the comparisons of force numbers matter. What if West Europeans are intimidated by an apparent improvement in how the Soviets would do in any nuclear war, in terms of who 'wins' such a war militarily? The 'victory' in a nuclear war may indeed be meaningless; but it can be politically significant if anyone changes his peacetime behavior because of how he anticipates this variable. What if Americans are intimidated by the prospects of losing the counterforce exchange in any future battle of nuclear missiles? What if West Europeans are not intimidated by the illusions here, but intimidated by the possibility that the Americans might be intimidated?⁵

The prospect of 'Finlandization' can mean a variety of things, but it generally suggests that the free-election countries sitting in the possible path of Soviet military forces may have to be fearful that any U.S. counter to such Soviet strength will be neutralized or reversed. Because an American president might no longer be ready to inflict nuclear destruction on the Soviet Union (since the U.S.S.R. can do the same on the United States), he might hypothetically acquiesce in the Soviet conquest of Western Europe.

As the solution to this problem of possible Finlandization, the United States could invest heavily in conventional defenses. Or, to avoid the dilemma of having to choose between suicidal nuclear escalation and abject surrender, the United States could instead seek after counterforce applications of nuclear weapons. This would be to seek ways to fight a nuclear war without destroying the targets most valued to the Soviet leadership (hence retaining some dissuasion for any Soviet strikes at American population centers). It would be to seek ways to use nuclear weapons to blunt the Soviet ability to win either a conventional or nuclear war. By denying Moscow the prospect of victory, the deterrence of any Soviet move westward would be reinforced and restored, and along with it would be restored the morale and self-confidence of individual West Europeans and Americans.⁶

It must be stressed that we have shifted from discussing the realities of nuclear war and extended nuclear deterrence here, to discussing the perceptions held by human beings, perceptions which may not accord with reality, but which have a real political significance on their own. In reality, it is very difficult to predict how a nuclear exchange limited to certain areas of Europe, or another nuclear exchange devoted entirely to counterforce targeting across the entire Northern Hemisphere, would come out in terms of 'who won' such a war. It is much easier to predict that any such exchange, even with the best-laid plans, and greatest efforts at careful aiming, will impose tremendous collateral damage on all the civilian assets that are anywhere near the battle area.

It would be contended here that none of this has changed since 1955, when the first 'tactical nuclear weapons' were deployed into West Germany. If the rational problem has not changed in any of its significant parameters, however, the possibility remains that perceptions have changed, or will change, such that even a ten percent increase in the Soviet nuclear arsenal which made no military difference might one day make a major political difference.

NATO leaders have a real duty to maintain a political climate whereby their democratic election systems are not intimidated by the prospect of Soviet military power. If the earlier analysis of Pierre Gallois or Henry Kissinger comes to be widely accepted, that no American leader would ever plunge his own country into an exchange of nuclear destruction simply because Europe was being subjected to Soviet rule, then this image would become troublesome by itself, even if the reality was very much the opposite, very much that no Soviet leader would ever dare risk the American responses if he sent his tank columns forward. If a modification of this image has won acceptance, by which an American nuclear response remains credible, but only because it will be designed for military and counterforce purposes, avoiding countervalue attacks as much as possible, then we might again

encounter a parallel problem of intimidation, whenever analysts and men-on-the street began concluding that such a counterforce exchange (because of an enhancement of Soviet force totals) now no longer could favor the West.

It would then make less difference if the reality were that such a counterforce exchange had never 'favored' the West, because too much damage had been inflicted on the Soviets. The important point is that images take on a life of their own here; if a false antidote had been accepted for a false problem, an erosion of this antidote would seem to bring the problem back to life.

Changes In the Opportunities?

A first 'rational' argument for changes in U.S. nuclear strategy over the past two decades has thus been that the growth of the Soviet nuclear arsenal somehow required such a change; a deterrence that would have worked when the Soviets had no atomic bombs might not work once they had some, or a deterrence which worked when the Soviets had a markedly smaller nuclear arsenal than the United States might not work once their arsenal was equal to, or greater than, that of the United States.

A second 'rational' argument for such changes in strategy works out from a different physical base, taking seriously the alleged improvements that may now be possible in western weapons options, either conventional or nuclear options.

What if conventional weapons can be substantially improved, so that they would have much more of a chance of blunting any Soviet armored force advance? And what if such weapons can be very carefully aimed in combat, to greatly reduce whatever collateral damage would be imposed on the surrounding civilians?

Similarly, what if nuclear weapons can be modified and refined so that they will be targeted to blunt any Soviet advance, simply stopping Moscow's forces from reaching their goals? And what if such nuclear weapons can be much more carefully aimed, with the use of smaller warheads, so that the worst of the destruction normally involved in nuclear scenarios is avoided?

In either case, one would have a powerful argument, in terms of opportunity, rather than requirement, for shifting to a new kind of strategy, producing a deterrence which might be more effective, and producing a warfighting policy which would be much more productive, and much less destructive, if deterrence were indeed one day to fail.

Limited Nuclear Warfare

We might begin here with the temptations of the second possibility, the use of nuclear weapons in a more limited and refined way, discussing the possibilities as well as the pitfalls, and we will then shift to the conventional warfare options.

While the shift from 1950's nuclear strategies to the plans of the McNamara SIOP in the 1960's, and then of PD-59 and NSDD-13, might seem a steady progression in the direction of hitting counterforce targets, and of avoidance of countervalue destruction, there is at least one problem of confusion in how we interpret the history here. Massive retaliation may be how we remember the Eisenhower nuclear war plans, but American historians rummaging through documents released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) often offer us the startling revelation that American plans, even in the 1950's, were much more heavily counterforce, and not simply the destruction of Soviet cities.⁸ (Soviet cities would indeed have been destroyed, but as the collateral side-effect of an effort to cripple the Soviet ability to wage war, with the sheer size of nuclear warheads presumably precluding any separation of the two kinds of destructive impact.)

It has thus all along seemed logical and rational, to the U.S. Air Force target planners in Omaha, that any opportunity for disarming and disabling the Soviet military forces should be pursued. The emphasis of this under McNamara or Schlesinger or Harold Brown or Caspar Weinberger was thus hardly new. What might rather have been new were rosier expectations of the ability to hit exactly the right military targets, and (in face of the Soviet ability to hit America cities) of the ability to avoid destroying other Soviet targets that the leadership in Moscow might value.

Variations on how to accomplish this have included uses of nuclear weapons only within specified combat zones, i.e. perhaps only along the front in Central Europe, or only west of the Soviet border with Poland, and also uses all across the two superpowers' home territories, but still aimed to avoid the unnecessary destruction of civilian life.⁹ The biggest problem with this kind of 'rational exploitation of opportunity' comes on this latter count, whether the collateral damage in any use of nuclear weapons can ever be held down so that the other side could appreciate it, i.e. is the opportunity really there?¹⁰

The winds blow from west to east in Europe; any use of nuclear weapons only in East and West Germany, or only in Poland, would soon enough deposit radioactive fallout inside the U.S.S.R. as well. Pilots and artillerymen and missile crews can make mistakes, or can behave insubordinately, and other possibilities would thus emerge by which cities within the

U.S.S.R. would come to be struck. Where counterforce targeting had been extended within the U.S.S.R. itself, even with the best efforts to aim carefully at targets and to hold down the collateral damage, the likely casualty toll would quickly mount into the millions, because of where some perfectly legitimate Soviet military targets are located, and again because of the winds dispersing the radioactive fallout that surely would result.

Ever since 1955, American military planners have been claiming to see possibilities of limited nuclear war, cases where nuclear weapons could be used without an escalation to all-out war. Over the same three decades, skeptics in the United States and Western Europe have again and again questioned whether this is at all possible. They have been joined in these expressions of skepticism by spokesmen for the U.S.S.R. (who, of course, cannot so readily be assumed to be rendering their true opinions and honest analysis, but rather may be serving their own national purposes, in pretending to see some things as possible and others as impossible).

It would indeed be 'rational' to use nuclear weapons in combat after the Soviets had crossed the Elbe River, if such weapons were going to be very helpful in pushing the aggressors back, and if the damage caused by such weapons would not be as horrendous as we normally calculate it to be. But the newest of theater nuclear options do not really seem to be much more promising here than the earlier projects for limited nuclear war, and one must suspect that some kind of meta-rational game has been played here, and is still being played.

The United States nuclear weapons deployed to West Germany may thus indeed still be 'tripwires', intended to show the Soviets that nuclear escalation will indeed occur, as part of the 'flexible response' to any Warsaw Pact conventional ground force invasion that did not seem stoppable by conventional means.

All the officers and planners involved pretend, to themselves and to others, to be something other than tripwires, but this is indeed to make them more plausible as tripwires, in seeming to be intent on accomplishing something else. If the nuclear forces deployed into any plausible Soviet aggression path were explicitly to admit to being there merely to dispell doubts about U.S. nuclear escalation, they would in effect amplify and call attention to such doubts. When such forces instead profess to be intent, in light of such doubts, to be merely applying nuclear weapons in a manner that will not escalate beyond the theater, the risks that such an escalation will follow are very much enhanced. The premise of 'limited nuclear war' seems completely unrealistic, a kind of folly on the part of those who are allegedly basing their plan upon it; but the Soviets have to take seriously the risk that western military planner are actually accepting this folly.

If the Soviets cannot be counted upon to be impressed and deterred by American resolve for the protection of NATO allies, they may thus be counted upon to be impressed and deterred by such operational folly. Americans counting upon a limited nuclear response to a Soviet conventional aggression would plunge the world into the worst of a thermonuclear World War III, and Gorbachev would therefore choose never to launch the Soviet conventional aggressions in the first place.

This amounts to yet another variant on the theme of the 'rationality of irrationality'. American policy, after war had broken out, would be badly-informed and irrational, and counterproductive for all concerned; but having this in place in advance of war, so as to deter war because the Soviets are aware of it, may be very productive and rational.¹¹

Conventional Defense

Some of the proposed new 'limited' applications for nuclear warheads are based on greatly enhanced accuracies in the ballistic and cruise missiles that are to deliver them, perhaps making such warheads much more effective at incapacitating the enemy's military structure, and correspondingly less destructive to the civilian structures that all sides might prefer to protect. Yet such an enhancement of accuracies begs a question, for with the greatest of accuracy, the military target in question might be hit well enough with a conventional warhead. The alternative to plans for limited nuclear war, a substitute for massive retaliation over all these years, would thus be preparations for a more effective conventional defense.¹²

It is beyond doubt that such a use of conventional warheads would impose far less death and destruction than any corresponding use of nuclear warheads. Having noted this, one should not be too quick to forget the levels of damage inflicted during World War II; any avoidance of a nuclear World War III which quickly facilitated someone's launching a conventional repeat of World War II in Central Europe might strike many people as no bargain. Yet, if conventional weapons could also be enhanced in their military effectiveness, so as to strengthen the defense of NATO against any Soviet conventional attack, might this not be the best of all worlds, maintaining or enhancing the deterrence of war in the first place, and substantially decreasing the costs of war, if war nonetheless occurred? We would have a rational policy here ex post, as well as ex ante, as the newest in military techniques and planning were applied to better the situation of all concerned.

Hopes are thus sometimes put forward that new anti-tank guided munitions (ATGM) will be able to render the tank vulnerable and obsolete, thus removing from the military balance a weapons system in which the Soviets have invested heavily even since World War II, a weapons system which

also always seems to favor mobility and the offensive, rather than easing crisis stability and reinforcing the defense. Similar hopes are offered for conventional warhead applications of cruise missiles, perhaps allowing for the destruction of every bridge crossing the rivers in Poland, thereby very badly handicapping any Soviet invasion that had been launched in Germany. Other hopes are put forward for new kinds of maneuver strategy, and new kinds of NATO army formations, combining the tactical wisdom of the commanders of World War II with the latest in weapons options, all with the goal of reliably denying Moscow any opportunities for a military invasion of West Germany and the rest of the NATO area.

What can be said against such alternatives to massive retaliation postures, or to the limited nuclear warfare options which are all too likely to become massive retaliation, because their planners have underestimated the collateral damage that would be imposed in the very most restrained of nuclear attacks?

We have already noted one worrisome inherent possibility: any such approach, by reducing the damage inflicted if war were to occur, might somewhat enhance the willingness of Moscow to try such a war, to gamble that it might gain some territory, that it might at last 'liberate' the workers of Frankfurt or Amsterdam.

A different category of considerations has pertained to the economic and human costs of preparing a more adequate conventional defense. Will there not be a great economic drain here, a waste of economic resources in preventing wars, wars that could have been prevented much more cheaply by continuing to rely on nuclear deterrence? If young men have to serve longer terms of military service, this is hardly a gain for society as a whole. The economic progress achieved by West Germany and all of Western Europe after the 1940's was a boon for all mankind; would such progress have been possible if nuclear weapons had never been invented, if the United States and its NATO partners had possessed no other options but mounting a conventional defense system, or trusting the intentions of Stalin and his successors?¹³

Finally, as perhaps the most serious practical problem in a shift to conventional defenses for Western Europe, such defenses would rely heavily on the latest in technology, raising the prospect that measure and countermeasure would continually be overturning each other. The flux in electronic and other military technologies is now very rapid, and any defense which seemed reliable for one half-decade might thus be in doubt again for the next. Our problems here are illustrated all too well in the short bursts of warfare between Israel and its Arab enemies in the Middle East, where some modern weapons systems work very well, and others do not work at all, with the technical representatives ('tech reps') of the

American or Soviet weapons suppliers then frantically racing around, trying to remedy the defects before another half-day of combat is completed.¹⁴

The latest in anti-tank weapons, or in surface-to-air missiles, might indeed favor the defensive, in that they offer very high kill probabilities wherever a target has been identified, as the task is spotting a metal object against a non-metallic background. When a target is moving, it is presumably easier to spot than when it is sitting still, and this would then seem to favor the defense, the side sitting still, rather than favoring the force which had elected to take the aggressive initiative, thrusting across boundaries and lines of demarcation. Yet the sheer unpredictability of such systems leaves us still very much in doubt about how any conventional war would run between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Depending on a great number of variables, technological and otherwise, such a war could see Communist forces very rapidly reaching the Rhine River or beyond, or very quickly being stalemated, or even could see NATO forces very soon penetrating deep into East Germany or Czechoslovakia.

We are doomed to live with a major paradox with regard to the predictability of nuclear and conventional wars, as we approach the end of the twentieth century. We have had many conventional wars in the past, and many rounds of conventional warfare even since nuclear weapons were introduced at the end of World War II. But we are really not at all good at predicting how such wars will turn out, who will control the disputed territory at the end, who will lose the most forces and military capability as the shots are exchanged. By contrast, we have never had any experience with a nuclear war (a war in which both sides used nuclear weapons); but one aspect of such a war is eminently predictable, that the countervalue damage, the destruction and death imposed in such a war, will surely be horrendous.

If the people and governments of Western Europe and of the United States, and of South Korea, are thus looking for some certainties, as they must confront the inherent possibility of a Soviet military invasion, it is altogether possible that they will still find more of such certainty in nuclear deterrence than in conventional deterrence.

Bureaucratic Motivations

With both nuclear and conventional systems, there are thus rational arguments that could be advanced for such preparations, and rational arguments against. Yet there are also, of course, some political and meta-rational factors at work here, playing an important additional role for explaining when such plans draw more enthusiasm, and when they draw less.

The simple bureaucratic politics of any military group, and of the civilians it works with, will see some enthusiasm developed for such projects once they are launched.¹⁵ Armies may not be so effective as tripwires if they admit openly to be tripwires, a consideration already noted above. Such armies would also not get to be as large, or as replete with promotions and appropriations, if they admitted to being nothing more than a linkage for massive retaliation. Ever since the 1950's, therefore, the United States Army, and the tactically-oriented portions of the U.S. Air Force, have thus been spokesmen for the possibilities of, and preparations for, limited war.

Perhaps such wars are proposed to be fought in a limited manner with tactical nuclear warheads, as advocated by Henry Kissinger in his first book. If outside analysts would indeed conclude this possibility to be substantially unworkable and unrealistic, the military officers involved, and the civilians assigned to procuring the necessary weaponry, will nonetheless promote the possibility and radiate a belief in it.

Perhaps such wars would instead be proposed to be fought only with conventional weapons, thus more surely to avoid escalation to a World War III, or the destruction of the very West Germany territory that was being contested. Again, the military officers involved will radiate a 'can do' attitude about their assigned task.

Every portion of every government may, therefore, be suspected of pushing its political or career commitments forward, in ways that blur or interfere with really efficient or rational analysis.

The U.S. Air Force, in its planning for counterforce uses of nuclear weapons rather than countervalue, similarly has followed the paths of 'strategic planning' that justify and induce a larger air force. If the only task of such Strategic Air Command (SAC) weapons was to destroy the cities of the Soviet Union (many who believe in nuclear deterrence would have concluded, from the 1950's all through to the 1980's, that this was indeed the only task that mattered), then a considerably smaller air force would have sufficed.

Preparations for policies other than massive retaliation thus amount to an opportunity for more extensive, and more expensive, military preparations. There is probably no political process in the world where such a difference would not be significant to all the parties involved, in ways which distort and twist the strategic debate. The kinds of government officers who favor lower military expenditures, whether it be Eisenhower in the United States, or all the various governments in the West European NATO states since the 1950's, will favor a continued reliance on the threat of nuclear

escalation. The operators of their military establishments have typically favored other approaches, and greater spending.

The Democratic Electoral Process

As a final kind of factor which is more political and less rational, we must contend, throughout the West, with the election process. The opposition parties must find things to criticize in the policies of the incumbents, if they are to escape a 'me-too' image, if they are to have any chance of defeating the incumbents. When the opposition then wins an election, as with the Democrats in the United States in 1960, or the Republicans in 1980, it will be necessary for them then to maintain an image of 'improvements' and 'better ideas', by finding some new policies to implement, by finding some changes to make.

This phenomenon of 'change for change's sake' can sometimes be very superficial, as the nomenclature of defense documents is changed from PD ('Presidential Directive') to NSDD ('National Security Decision Directive'). At other points it can involve a more major shift to new nuclear weapons and targeting schemes, or new conventional weapons and targeting schemes; yet if these changes may be very real, they may not always be so desirable.

Such 'change for change's sake' is thus somewhat the bias of a political democracy. It may similarly be the artificial bias of other very important elements of any democracy, the press, and the academic world. One does not sell newspapers, and one does not capture attention as a professor, by saying that all is well with current arrangements. One rather must find something to criticize, and find some changes to propose. One must conjure up arguments why yesterday's preparations for defense or deterrence will no longer work tomorrow.

In Conclusion

It is entirely plausible that the arrangements that worked yesterday can indeed work very well tomorrow, and that any changes in such arrangements will be changes for the worse, rather than for the better. Yet we are likely, for all the reasons noted, to keep on discussing 'trends' and 'changes' in strategic policy here, and perhaps to keep on fooling ourselves on how much further 'change' is needed.

What is 'rational' about our handling of our security problems will always have to interact with what is more 'political' or 'psychological'; what is substantive will be intertwined with what is procedural. The confusions this produces hardly stand in the way of a successful resolution of our

difficulties; rather they may keep us from ever acknowledging the successes when we encounter them.

Notes

- 1 For some interpretations stressing the changes, see Huntington (ed.) 1982.
- 2 This is the progression outlined in Martel/Savage 1986.
- 3 A good example of the perspective by which nothing significant has changed can be found in Jervis 1984.
- 4 For the same argument, justifying French nuclear weapons, see Gallois 1961.
- 5 The possibilities of an intimidation of the West European democracies as a result of changing nuclear force ratios is discussed in Nitze 1976.
- 6 Some interesting versions of this kind of argument are offered by Gray 1986.
- 7 For a good example of this kind of exploration of opportunities on the conventional defense side, see Mako 1983.
- 8 See for interesting illustrations Friedberg 1980 and Rosenberg 1981.
- 9 For some optimism about limiting nuclear war, see Albert 1976.
- 10 For a very skeptical interpretation of the feasibility of limiting nuclear war, see McNamara 1983.
- 11 Schelling 1960 presents a lucid early discussion of the threat that leaves something to chance here.
- 12 On conventional warhead uses of high accuracies, see Ohlert 1978.
- 13 On the economic burdens of preparations for a purely conventional defense, see Kaiser/Leber/Mertes/Schulze 1982.
- 14 The uncertainties of contemporary conventional war are discussed in Betts 1982.
- 15 On the motivations imputed by the bureaucratic politics model, see Halperin 1974.

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