

INTRODUCTION

STRATEGY, THE MISSING LINK IN OUR FIGHT AGAINST PROLIFERATION

Henry D. Sokolski

On July 14, 1999, the Congressionally-mandated Commission to Assess the Organization of the Federal Government to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction determined that although the proliferation of strategic weapons capabilities was of "paramount national security concern" to the United States, our government lacked the long-term country-specific strategies to check this threat. In particular, what the government required were "strategies which capitalize on America's enduring military, economic, political, and diplomatic strengths to . . . leverage against proliferators' clear vulnerabilities in these areas."

The commission identified what these leveraged strategies' general goals should be: dissuading nations from proliferating, encouraging hostile regimes to give way to more peaceable ones, keeping our friends secure, and strengthening international support of strict standards of nonproliferation. What it did not do was discuss what devising such strategies would entail.

This edited volume is designed to prompt such a discussion. Although it is modest in size (it contains only seven chapters), *Prevailing* is the first book to focus on these issues. It is divided into three parts.

Part I consists of two chapters. The first, "Competitive Strategies: An Approach against Proliferation," is written by David J. Andre, who helped implement the Competitive Strategies Initiative in the Pentagon. He reviews how this methodology was used for military planning purposes

during the Reagan administration. He then details what key questions one needs to answer to devise a competitive strategy and considers what difficulties one might encounter in trying to apply such a methodology to specific proliferation threats. The second chapter, "Competitive Strategies as a Teaching Tool," by Bernard I. Finel, examines why and how such planning techniques should be taught.

Part II uses competitive strategies analysis to evaluate how well U.S. nonproliferation and counterproliferation policies have performed and how they might be enhanced. Chapter 3, "Nonproliferation: Strategies for Winning, Losing, and Coping," by Henry D. Sokolski, examines the most recent nonproliferation successes and failures and uses competitive strategies analysis to devise a set of simplified criteria for distinguishing between the two. Zachary S. Davis and Mitchell B. Reiss, meanwhile, take a longer-term look at the same set of issues in Chapter 4, "Nuclear Nonproliferation: Where Has The United States Won—and Why." Finally, Thomas G. Mahnken explains why the Defense Department's Counterproliferation Initiative may be necessary but is far short of being a competitive strategy in Chapter 5, "Counterproliferation: Shy of Winning."

The volume's concluding part takes the process one step further by using competitive strategies analysis to articulate two specific alternative strategies for dealing with the case example of Iran. Chapter 6 by Kenneth R. Timmerman is "Fighting Proliferation through Democracy: A Competitive Strategies Approach toward Iran." Chapter 7, "Dual Containment as an Effective Competitive Strategy," was written by Patrick Clawson.

The book was designed to challenge conventional thinking not only about nonproliferation but also about strategy. Indeed, when one thinks of strategy, competitive strategies analysis rarely comes to mind. Instead, the focus is usually on classical works by Clausewitz, Jomini, Foch,

Mahan, Machiavelli, Thucydides, Douhet, Sun Tzu, and Mckinder. Or, if one is more contemporary, the focus might be on systems analysis planning tools and their variations used by budgeters, decisionmakers, and program managers in the Pentagon;¹ and the ever growing self-help literature for successful managers. Finally, one might simply focus on the growing list of bad things most planners do (e.g., worst case analysis, linear planning, and mirror imaging).

Competitive strategies planning is none of these things. Unlike systems analysis and its variations, it is not an engineering or resource allocation tool designed to produce optimal solutions under conditions where the number of variables are limited.² Nor is it a set of management tips useful for personal improvement. And, unlike the classics on warfare, competitive strategies planning and its principles are neither bound to specific historical settings nor open to endless debates about their meaning.

First devised at the Harvard Business School for business managers by Professor Michael Porter, competitive strategies is, as David Andre writes in Chapter 1, "both a process and a product."³ As a product, a competitive strategy is a plan of action that assures its owner a long-term advantage in a particular competition. As a process, competitive strategies planning requires that one identify and align his enduring strengths against his competitor's enduring weaknesses (enduring in the case of national competitions being the next 10 to 20 years). Among other things, competitive strategies planning requires thinking through at least a three-step, chess-match-like process over a given period of time. This entails projecting one's first move, the competitor's most likely response, and then one's best countermove against this response. The goal is always to be able to get one's competitor to spend far more time and money (or other key resources) to respond to your moves than you need to respond to his.

Given these attributes, competitive strategies planning affords several clear benefits for anyone who is trying to

devise alternative strategies against a specific proliferator and who is anxious to avoid the worst tendencies of current policy planners. First, the methodology discourages U.S. officials from mirror-imaging proliferators either as equals who want what we want or as combatants who will simply pursue the opposite of any course we choose. Instead, competitive strategies planning requires policymakers to consider proliferators as distinct competitors with distinct goals, weaknesses, strategies, and dispositions. Identifying these is necessary for planners to detail how to leverage the proliferator's behavior over time. Second, unlike most military and foreign policy planning efforts, which emphasize bilateral relationships or conflict, competitive strategies requires planners to factor in the strategies and actions of other, key third parties. Third, the methodology places a premium on anticipating rather than reacting to threats—something sorely missing in most nonproliferation efforts. And finally, unlike nonproliferation and counterproliferation (whose premises are rarely questioned and whose progress is only measured in money spent or agreements reached), competitive strategies planning requires setting clear goals. This includes setting clear deadlines and routine reviews and updating of the entire strategy.

What exactly are the questions that must be answered to succeed at competitive strategies planning? During the 1980s the Pentagon devised 14 questions described in detail in Chapter 1 to guide its military activities against Moscow. This was done by the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment to help identify the kinds of military investments and operations that might channel Soviet military investments away from offensive capabilities that could further threaten the United States.

Rather than try to shore up U.S. vulnerabilities by investing more U.S. dollars into building more bomb shelters or trying to match every new Soviet offensive weapon by building more vulnerable ships or planes of our own, competitive strategies analyses focused on how to keep

Moscow on the defensive. Aimed to exploit the Communists' inclination to worry about their ability to maintain political and military control, these operations encouraged the Soviets to spend billions on inoffensive (and mostly ineffective) anti-submarine and air and missile defense capabilities. In conjunction with a variety of other U.S. competitive actions being shepherded by other government offices—support of freedom fighters in Afghanistan and Nicaragua, a cut-off of Russian access to U.S. financial markets, support of dissident organizations throughout the Warsaw Pact, massive U.S. research (vice deployment of space-based weaponry)—these military operations not only helped contain Soviet aggression, but ultimately assisted in making the Communist government collapse and give way to a far less hostile regime.⁴

The 14 questions that helped the Pentagon guide this competition are also relevant to long-term competition planning more generally. In fact, last June, at a conference held at the Army War College, these questions were adapted to begin work on devising a long-term strategy for dealing with North Korea. That project is still underway, will continue through the year 2000, and will result in a follow-on volume. The aim of this project, like that of this volume, will be to help assure that the strategic gap in our planning against proliferation is filled.

ENDNOTES - INTRODUCTION

1. See, e.g., Glenn.A. Kent, *A Framework for Defense Planning* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1989, R-3721 AF/OSD).

2. For more detailed critiques see E. S. Quade, "Pitfalls of Systems Analysis," in Quade, ed., *Analysis for Military Decisions: The RAND Lectures on Systems Analysis* New York: American Elsevier, 1970; and Paul Davis, *New Challenges for Defense Planning: Rethinking How Much is Enough*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994, MR-400-RC, 1994.

3. See Michael E. Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors* New York: Free Press, 1980; and *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* New York: Free Press, 1990.

4. On the role of competitive strategies during this period, see, David J. Andre, *New Competitive Strategies: Tools and Methodologies* Vol. 1, *Review of the Department of Defense Competitive Strategies Initiative, 1986-1990*, Final Technical Report, McLean, VA: Science Applications International Corporation, November 30, 1990; and J. J. Martin, *et al.*, *The U.S.-Soviet Long-term Military Competition* Final Technical Report prepared for the Director, Defense Nuclear Agency, and Director, Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vols., 1-3, San Diego, CA: Science Applications International Corporation, June 5, 1990.