

## PREFACE

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The United States has a long-standing commitment to efforts to limit, delay, or stop, and even reverse the proliferation of a variety of weapons and weapon systems. The several papers contained in this volume are drawn from a conference that explored the merits of, and various methods of applying, a competitive strategies approach to the pursuit of U.S. goals in nonproliferation. This approach requires thinking through how to improve one's relative position in any long-term competition.

Of course, a great deal of thought has gone into appropriate policies and approaches to nonproliferation, but the idea of applying competitive strategies to the problem of proliferation is an interesting one. The reason it is interesting is that starting from a competitive strategies perspective may succeed in reconceptualizing the problem in such a way that new insights and new potential strategies emerge.

It has had this effect in some other cases. Its intellectual history goes back to 1969 when at RAND I took over the direction of the strategic warfare studies area. In reviewing the existing program I found that it was not a very coherent overall program of studies.

When I thought about the question of how you should look at the area of strategic warfare it occurred to me that already more than 20 years had elapsed in a continuing political-military-economic competition with the Soviet Union in the development and fielding of strategic nuclear forces, and defenses against such forces. Moreover, this competition would extend, in all likelihood, well into the future. Indeed for all practical purposes it needed to be treated almost as an endless competition that evolved over time as technology changed, as the resources available for investment by either side changed, as arms control

agreements were reached, and so forth. Also, in part, but only in part, each side's forces represented a reaction to earlier or anticipated actions by the other competitor.

When I looked at how studies of particular programs or policy choices were conducted, it seemed to me that the criteria used in deciding what decision to make were far too narrow. Very often they focused entirely on the effectiveness of some proposed system in destroying targets in case of war. While this is not wrong in itself, it seemed to me that the first question one ought to be addressing was that of what is our strategy for competing effectively in this extended competition. In that case, each individual decision about a particular acquisition or change in the force posture ought to be seen as a move in the implementation of this broader strategy; and that the goals of the strategy were likely to be much more complex than were reflected in most of the studies.

Reconceptualizing the problem in this way was, at least for me, very useful. New kinds of questions and issues were raised. A new light was cast on older, more usual questions and issues. And once the problem was framed in this way, there were new insights into how the risks in this competition were changing and ought to be managed in the period of the 1970s as contrasted with the period of the 1950s.

Therefore, it seems to me that the approach that the papers in this volume are proposing could be useful for addressing the long-term security concerns raised by proliferation. Indeed the original terminology developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s—strategies for long-term competitions—may more easily evoke for readers what might be different than the term that was applied later, competitive strategies. The notion that what one is engaged in is a very extended process—an extended effort to influence and shape the course of this competition, to move it toward your goals, to build over time a superior position—may give one new ideas about how to impact on

the other competitor's resources and behavior. In particular, this way of thinking leads one much more naturally to look for weaknesses of others to exploit rather than reacting to strengths. When looking at the problem of how to limit and even reverse proliferation of weapons that make the world a more dangerous place, I believe that this is a reasonable place to begin.