

***Connecting the Elements of the Strategy:
Excerpt from Discriminate Deterrence (1988)***

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The Enduring Aims of U.S. Policy

We live in a world whose nations are increasingly connected by their economies, cultures, and politics — sometimes explosively connected as in the repeated vast migrations since World War II of refugees escaping political, religious, and racial persecution. It is a world in which military as well as economic power will be more and more widely distributed and in which the United States must continue to expect some nations to be deeply hostile to its purposes.

The United States does not seek to expand its territory at the expense of the Soviet Union or any other country. Nor do any of our allies present a danger of an invasion of the Soviet Union or the territories it dominates. The Soviets, nonetheless, insist that we, our allies and other countries, the weak as well as the powerful, do threaten attack. Such Soviet suspicions or assertions have been inherent in their system of rule: they need to posit a hostile world to establish the legitimacy of their regime. We would, needless to say, welcome a basic change in their antagonistic stance.

However, even if *perestroika* and *glasnost* signal an intention to make that change, it will not be easy to accomplish. Moscow's suspicion and hostility are rooted in 70 years of Soviet and 400 years of Tsarist history. Relaxing their hold on the countries they dominate on their borders can threaten their control of dissident nationalities within their borders. We should not deceive ourselves. The Western democracies cannot do much to advance the process simply by persuading the Soviets that we are not about to attack them, or by trying to shed any capability for offense — and thus for counterattack. Such efforts would merely reflect misunderstandings of the internal role played by external threats in Soviet rule; and might encourage aggression. The Soviets feel threatened by the autonomy of the free countries on their border.

The United States has critical interests in the continuing autonomy of some allies very distant from us — in Europe and

the Mediterranean, in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, in East Asia and the Pacific, and in the Western Hemisphere. We use bases, ports and air space in helping these allies defend themselves and one another. In some cases, where the danger to them from an adversary close by is especially great, it has been a durable element of U.S. strategy to deploy our forces forward. We do this, however, at the invitation of allies who are sovereign and independent of us and on conditions that they name. They can always ask us to leave. In some cases they have; and unlike the Soviets, we have always complied.

The fact that we lead sovereign allies who can differ from us in their interests in various circumstances and places has direct implications for defense; it means that even where there are gathering but ambiguous signs of danger to our common interests, getting a cohesive allied response and bringing it to bear in time to block the danger may be difficult. A dictator, or an involuntary coalition dominated by a dictatorship, has less trouble in preparing to launch military operations. And the Soviets are not, and will not be, the only danger to our interests.

In the changing environment of the next 20 years, the U.S. and its allies, formal and informal, will need to improve their ability to bring force to bear effectively, with discrimination and in time to thwart any of a wide range of plausible aggressions against their major common interests—and in that way to deter such aggressions.

We need to bring a longer view to the necessary day-to-day decisions on national security. The next two decades are likely to exhibit sharp discontinuities as well as gradual changes with effects that are cumulatively revolutionary: major new military powers, new technology, new sources of conflict and opportunities for cooperation. To cope with these changes, we will need versatile and adaptive forces.

An Integrated Strategy

Because our problems in the real world are connected and because budgets compel trade-offs, we need to fit together strategies for a wide range of conflicts: from the most confined, lowest intensity and highest probability to the most widespread, apocalyptic and least likely. We want the worse conflicts to be less likely, but that holds only if our weakness at some higher level—or the lack of a higher level response that democratic leaders would

be willing to use—does not invite such raising of the ante. For genuine stability, we need to assure our adversaries that military aggression at any level of violence against our important interest will be opposed by military force.

More violent wars grow out of less violent ones, and locally confined aggression (e.g., a Soviet invasion of the Persian Gulf) could drastically alter the correlation of forces. And one cannot completely separate “internal” and “external” conflicts. The shadow of Soviet intervention could affect the outcome of an internal succession crisis in Iran for example. (In the past the Soviets have used a puppet “Free Azerbaijan” to cloak their preparations for intervention in Iran and Eastern Turkey, which they appear to regard as strategically linked). Even terrorism can have a large effect on our ability to meet greater dangers by destabilizing vulnerable allies, dividing allies from each other, and dividing public opinion at home.

Policy statements on deterring and on fighting aggression should fit together. We cannot dissuade an attacker if he believes we are not willing as well as able to fight back. Our will is called into question by frequent statements about “mutual deterrence” that imply that we want the Soviets to be able to deter the United States unless the United States has been attacked. Such statements undermine the essential pledge that we will use conventional, and if they fail, nuclear weapons in response to a Soviet attack directed solely at an ally. Similarly, the Soviet leadership might be misled by statements, heard in Europe, that even winning a conventional war would be “unacceptable.” If such statements mean that fighting with nuclear weapons would do less harm to civilians than precisely delivered conventional weapons, or that such conventional weapons would cause “more harm to civilians than World War II,” they are plainly wrong. If they mean that the West would be unwilling to use either non-nuclear or nuclear weapons, then they suggest we would not respond at all and so erode our ability to deter an attack. The issue is about how effectively to deter a non-nuclear or a nuclear attack. We and our allies would rather deter than defeat an aggression, but a bluff is less effective and more dangerous in a crisis than the ability and will to use conventional and, if necessary, nuclear weapons with at least a rough discrimination that preserves the values we are defending.

Offense and defense (both active and passive) complement each other at any level of conflict. Just as our offensive capabilities

can discourage an adversary from concentrating to penetrate defenses, so active defense and passive defenses (such as concealment and mobility) are mutually reinforcing.

Decisions on military systems are interconnected and ought not to be dealt with piecemeal. The connections must be reflected in arms negotiations, in force planning and in the definition of military “requirements” during the acquisition process.

The Need to Consider a Wider Range of More Plausible, Important Contingencies

Alliance policy and weapons modernization...have focused largely on the two extreme contingencies of a massive Warsaw Pact conventional attack and an unrestrained Soviet nuclear attack aimed at widespread military targets, doing mortal damage. The first contingency diverts allied attention from obligations underlying the basic premise of the Alliance—that an attack on one possibly vulnerable ally is an attack on all—and it ignores the Soviet interest in inducing other allies to opt out. The second contingency assumes the Soviets would have little concern about inviting their own self-destruction, since it would leave us no incentive to exercise discrimination and restraint.

However, Soviet military planners have shown an awareness that if the Politburo uses military force, it has a strong incentive to do so selectively and keep the force under political control. They do not want their nuclear attack to get in the way of their invading forces or destroy what is being taken over. And above all, they do not want to risk the destruction of the Soviet Union. They recognize as revolutionary for the nature of war the ongoing revolution in microelectronics which makes possible the strategic use of non-nuclear weapons. Their 40 years of investment in protecting their national command system, as well as their careful attention to the wartime uses of space and other means of command and control, show they are serious about directing force for political ends and keeping it under control. If we take the extreme contingencies as the primary basis for planning, we will move less rapidly toward a more versatile, discriminating and controlled capability.

It will always be possible to slip mindlessly toward such an apocalypse, so we will always need to deter the extreme contingencies. But it does not take much nuclear force to destroy a civil society. We need to devote our predominant effort to a wide range of more plausible, important contingencies.

Changes in the Security Environment

Our central challenge since World War II has been to find ways, in formal and informal alliances with other sovereign states, to defeat and therefore deter aggression against our major interests at points much closer to our adversaries than to us. "Military balances," i.e., matching numbers of NATO and Warsaw Pact tanks, guns, anti-tank weapons, etc. (even adjusted for qualitative differences in technology) fail to reveal the problem. The issue is not simply one of distance, but of timely political access en route to and in a threatened area, and of getting cohesive, preparatory responses by sovereign allies in answer to ambiguous signs of gathering danger.

The Atlantic Alliance has a problem of cohesion. In dealing with countries like Nicaragua or Libya, it is perhaps not surprising that the allies differ in how they conceive their interests. But even on NATO's flanks and in the Persian Gulf, where the vital interests of our European allies in blocking a Soviet takeover are more direct and massive than ours, the problem has been worsening. In recent base negotiations, Spain and Portugal have shown little concern for their role in reinforcing Turkey or allied forces in the Gulf. And some NATO countries on the Northern Flank, with small military forces of their own, have opposed measures that would help timely reinforcement for themselves; they justify this opposition on the farfetched grounds that the Soviets need reassurance that they will not be the victims of an unprovoked attack. The increasing number of European advocates of "Non-Offensive Defense" would carry reassurance further by eschewing all "offensive" weapons. That would not prevent enemy attack, but it would prevent counterattacking.

While our timely access has deteriorated sharply since the 1950s, the Soviets have used their internal lines of communication to improve greatly their ability to bring conventional force to bear quickly at points on their periphery and have systematically improved their access to air space and bases near their periphery. As a result, in some vital theaters such as the Persian Gulf, their ability to bring force to bear has improved dramatically while ours has declined in absolute terms. In the next 20 years and in other theaters of conflict, increasingly well equipped smaller powers as well as new major military powers are likely to give us still stronger incentives to develop a more versatile and discriminate force.

We have developed a variety of precise weapons, both long and short range, and have taken important steps to improve the robustness and effectiveness of our command, control, communications and intelligence as well as the training of our forces. Cumulative advances in microelectronics have already had a revolutionary impact on the possibility of increasing the effectiveness of attacks on military targets while confining effects largely to these targets. The advances have enormously improved the possibilities of large scale battle management and the maintenance of political control. In the next decade or two, they will do so even more. Most importantly, these cumulative changes have made a single, or a few, nonnuclear weapons effective for many missions previously requiring thousands of nonnuclear weapons, or nuclear ones.

As stated elsewhere in this report, we would depend heavily on space systems for the control and direction of our conventional forces needed to defeat a Soviet invasion, and the Soviets would use their own satellites as an essential support for their invasion. Each side would have strong reasons to defend its own space system and to degrade the other side's.

The dynamism of our private sector gives us an inherent advantage in realizing the benefits offered by the new technologies. Nevertheless, we and our allies have often lagged in actually fielding the capabilities needed to meet the increasingly formidable dangers presented by the growing strength of the Soviets and other potential antagonists.

Wars on the Soviet Periphery and in the Third World

We and the Soviets will have very large incentives to exploit the greater effectiveness and discrimination of conventional weapons afforded by the new information technologies and to confine destruction so as to give the other side a stake in keeping destruction within bounds. If nuclear weapons were used, both sides would have even larger incentives to rely on technologies of control, since losing control then would be most disastrous. Both sides have devoted growing efforts to ensure the survivability of their command and control under wartime conditions.

The equipment, training, uses of intelligence, and methods of operation we have developed mainly for contingencies involving massive worldwide attacks by the Soviet Union do not prepare us very well for conflicts in the Third World. Such conflicts are likely

to feature terrorism, sabotage, and other "low intensity" violence. Assisting allies to respond to such violence will put a premium on the use of some of the same information technologies we find increasingly relevant for selective operations in higher intensity conflicts. The need to use force for political purposes and to discriminate between civilian and legitimate targets is even more evident here. In particular, we will need optical and electronic intelligence, communications and control, and precise delivery of weapons so as to minimize damage to noncombatants. We will need advanced technologies for training local forces. These will be important both for obtaining local political support and support in the United States and elsewhere in the West.

The Northern and Southern Flanks of NATO are more weakly defended than the Center. Both are of critical importance for the Center's defense, but both suffer from political problems which inhibit reinforcement in a timely manner. Defense of the Northern Flank depends critically on rapid reinforcement from the U.S. and the rest of NATO; yet increased restrictions on U.S. and NATO activities in Norway limit our ability to bring force to bear quickly in defense of the region. In the south, Turkey is of key importance both in the defense of U.S. and other naval forces in the Eastern Mediterranean and defense of our interests in the Persian Gulf. Turkey's critical importance should be recognized by increasing security assistance from the U.S. and from other members of NATO as well as countries such as Japan that have a vital interest in the areas Turkey would help to defend.

In the Persian Gulf itself, the great distances and political difficulties involved in obtaining timely access must be overcome to mount a credible defense of the region. Improvements in technology, and a greater allied willingness to share the political risks of getting such access, would greatly improve our ability to deter attacks.

Both South Korea and Japan will be increasingly able to defend themselves against a conventional invasion. The U.S. presence in both countries works to discourage possible dangers, such as Soviet (or Chinese) intervention or use of nuclear weapons, and should be continued, not least because it is also of great importance in increasing our capability to deal in a timely way with threats elsewhere in the Western Pacific.

It has long been the policy of the Atlantic Alliance that if non-nuclear force proves inadequate, we must be prepared to use nuclear force to stop a conventional invasion. But this force

should be effective and discriminate—kept under control rather than a suicidal bluff. We need in any case the ability to deter plausible nuclear attacks on U.S. and allied forces. This should include a large role in defending common interests outside national boundaries and outside Alliance boundaries where, as in the Persian Gulf, allied critical interests clearly coincide with our own. A larger nuclear role in the defense of other European allies, which has been suggested for the British and French, will require, as in our own case, an effective and discriminate nuclear force capable of use to defeat a Soviet invasion into allied territory. The French and British now have options to move in that direction.

The Coherent Use of Resources for Security

We have lagged in fielding weapons systems needed to cope with the increasingly capable forces of the Soviet Union and lesser adversaries of the Third World. As the Packard Commission has stressed, this lag has to do with cumbersome and unstable acquisition and R&D funding procedures and the lack of adequate and early testing. To overcome this lag, we should turn to faster prototyping and testing of systems that would make our forces more versatile and discriminate.

Equally important, however, will be clearly defined “requirements” that are related to a coherent national strategy. “Requirements” guided by a long-term strategy are critical to getting the most out of a given budget.

The increasingly widespread latent dangers with which we and our allies must cope do not justify the belief that we can safely hold our defense budget level, much less reduce it. However, if tighter budgets impose an increase in risks, we should, for the near term, accept a greater risk of the unlikely extreme attacks, in order to bring about a reduced risk of the more probable conflicts, both now and in the future. Instead of giving priority to buying various types of large “platforms,” we should seek continued improvement in the sensors and command, control and intelligence systems which can multiply the effectiveness of our ships and aircraft. And we must provide the resources needed to maintain the training, morale, and excellence in leadership of the men and women in the armed forces.

Arms Agreements and the Continuing Problem of Bringing Discriminate and Timely Force to Bear Against Aggression

Carefully designed and enforceable arms agreements can help reduce the risk of war by diminishing military threats for a range of plausible contingencies while preserving, or facilitating, our capability to keep the application of force discriminate and effective. Recent proposals by the Soviets and some in the West to stop the testing of missiles, nuclear warheads, anti-satellite systems and active defenses have been based on the premise that this would slow the qualitative arms race that is assumed to drive a quantitative arms race. However, such restraints frequently would have the opposite effect to that intended; they would make the job of getting a credible deterrent harder. As explained elsewhere in this report, a well-designed agreement on self-defense zones in space could make it easier to protect the space-borne sensors, and command, control and communications systems. An agreement that would drastically reduce the Soviet advantage in non-nuclear force has been proposed by leaders in both American Parties and by many prominent Europeans. Its purpose would be to make more equal the ability of NATO and the Warsaw Pact to bring timely, effective force to bear at critical danger points. It would thus address the basic East-West asymmetries due to geography and the greater Soviet conventional effort.

The strategy recommended in this report should guide arms negotiations as well as national and Alliance decisions on defense. Such a strategy of discriminate deterrence seems in any case more capable of building a community of interests with adversaries over the long run than reckless threats to annihilate their populations. Our arms control policy must be connected coherently to a viable, long-term Alliance strategy.