

End of the Cold War? End of History and All War?
Excerpt from an Outline for a Memoir (1989)

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The democracies appear to need imminent threats in order to induce them to prepare for latent long-term dangers. However, *Protecting U.S. Power to Strike Back in the 1950s and 1960s* (R-290), "The Delicate Balance [of Terror]," "The Objectives of U.S. Military Power" [RM-2373], "No Highway to High Purpose" and other [of my] writings on the second-strike theory of deterrence took pains to make clear that they were directed not at the immediate likelihood of a Soviet nuclear attack—due to Sputnik or a supposed "missile gap" or a "window of vulnerability" or the like. None of these writings held that the Soviets were straining at the leash to launch a nuclear attack and that an adequate second-strike capability was the only thing that held them back.

Even though R-290 had shown that Strategic Air Command (SAC) was very vulnerable in the mid-1950s, it said that its authors did not believe that an attack was imminent: that would depend on the Soviet alternatives to such an attack and the comparative risks. Unanticipated obstacles in the course of a Soviet conventional invasion in Eurasia, for example, might make the risks of a disastrous defeat so large that we would want the risks to the Soviets in a nuclear attack to be even larger.

In the mid 1950s, it was disturbing that the risks of such an attack to the Soviets were smaller than was generally understood. But rumors about SAC that appeared in the press at the time of the Gaither report were considerably less modulated. Even so matter-of-fact a reporter as Stewart Alsop said, "The American government has recently been presented with just about the grimmest warning in its history." And other reporters suggested that they were talking of a present danger of imminent attack.

"The Delicate Balance" and "No Highway to High Purpose," in contrast, talked about "a new image of ourselves in a world of *persistent danger*" and that the problem was more "like staying thin after 30." The serious danger, in any case, was never that of an

unrestrained Soviet version of a massive SIOP [Single Integrated Operational Plan]—the RISOP [Red Integrated Strategic Offensive/Operational Plan]—which preoccupies military planners.

Today the danger of a sudden massive all-out nuclear attack by the Soviet Union, or of a global conventional war focused on a Soviet invasion of the center of Europe which would quickly become an all-out nuclear war—never very large—has been receding even further. Moreover, the ideals of liberal democracy and free markets nearly everywhere seem to be gaining at the expense of the Utopian dreams of communism.

Does this mean there are no latent long-term dangers demanding prudence? Georgy Arbatov has suggested that we are deprived now of any adversary and need to focus only on problems of the environment and of economic development. We would all welcome that. However, the political and economic futures of the heavily armed communist states and of the increasingly lethally armed Third World countries are, to say the least, rather cloudy.

Even if, implausibly, the Second and Third Worlds change rapidly to the market economies of the First World, nice though this would be, we are likely to discover once again that, contrary to Cobden and the Manchester School, trade and investment—good things though they are—are not all that pacifying. Trading partners have found a good many reasons to go to war.

We haven't seen the end of fanaticism, mortal national and racial rivalries, and expansionist ambitions. It is conceivable that all the variously sized lions and lambs will lie down together, that there will be the kind of universal moral revolution that many hoped for at the end of World War II when they thought it, in any case, the only alternative to nuclear destruction. But, as Jacob Viner wrote at the time, "It is a long, long time between moral revolutions." We should not count on it. . . .