

**THE DOCTRINE OF LIMITED NUCLEAR WAR:
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPER POWER
RELATIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

The nuclear age ushered a belief that if a nuclear war was ever fought there would be total destruction on this planet. American strategic thinkers have been seized with this problem of how ^{to} stop this general nuclear war from becoming a reality from the earliest days of the atom bomb. Bernard Brodie, who could justifiably be called the father of the deterrence theory wrote, "full scale nuclear wars could be averted or deterred, but not really won.... Fear of substantial retaliation would be the key to nuclear policy, which would be to win wars, but to avert them. Moreover, the only rational purpose in stockpiling more nuclear weapons would be to ensure that they need not be used in time of war."¹

Even before the Soviet Union had exploded its first bomb, the immense potential of the bomb had made strategic thinkers realize its awesome power. Over a period of time, despite the claims of small sections of the academic and military community, the nuclear weapons were considered as last resort. Deterrence was to be the bedrock on which American strategic policy was based. Though the US did not

1 Bernard Brodie, quoted in Robert C Williams, and Philip Cantelon, eds., The American Atom - A Documentary History of Nuclear Policies from the Discovery of Fission to the Present 1939-1984. (Philadelphia 1984), p.210.

have a coherent strategic nuclear policy in the early years of the atomic age, the "Massive Retaliation" doctrine, enunciated by John Foster Dulles in 1954 was proof of the validity of such thinking.

Even before the Massive Retaliation doctrine had been firmly enconsced as the official doctrine, it was criticized as not being credible. The main reason was that the Soviets had caught up with the American with respect to hydrogen bomb. However, their delivery capabilities were rudimentary and did not have the capability to destroy the whole of America. But the ability to destroy even parts of America made some strategic thinkers take the line, that to deter war on the American homeland, a limited war be fought in the European sector. The 'Sputnik' boast further fuelled the limited war state-gists because it was envisaged that a nuclear stalemate would make the Massive Retaliation doctrine incredible. Hence to counter Soviet threats in all parts of the world, there should be a range of options available for all levels of escalation. Thus limited war got a further impetus in US strategic thinking.

Under the Kennedy Administration, the Soviet threat was to be countered through the escalatory ladder. Mc-Namara also tried to "rationalize" nuclear response to Soviet threat with his "no-cities" doctrine. The

availability of technology also fuelled the limited nuclear war concept. While the Americans were channelizing the arms race into newer areas with the development of the tactical and theatre nuclear weapons, the Soviets were still trying to improve the accuracy and yield from the ICBMs. They were a far cry from developing tactical nuclear weapons. They tried to blunt the US lead in tactical and theatre nuclear weapons through political propaganda, that no nuclear war could remain limited. And in this they succeeded remarkably. The Americans after trying the defence based systems like anti-ballistic missile defence etc., came to the conclusion that technology was still not advanced enough to give the US a complete and foolproof shield against incoming missiles. This led to the ABM treaty, a treaty that resulted more from the failure of both sides experiments, to produce defense based systems. The late 1969s slipped American strategiv posture from counterforce and countervalue strategies to assured destruction.

However, with the Soviets steadily building up their nuclear arsenal, the US again got caught in the whirlpool of limited nuclear war. This time, however, there was a shift in the battlefield. Now theories started spewing forth scenarios that a strategic war between the super powers was not only to be a general war. With advancements in damage limitation strategies and greater accuracies in weapons

guidance mechanisms, counterforce was again a possibility.

The wheel turned a full circle in about a decade with the critique of assured destruction both on grounds of morality and credibility by Albert Wohlstetter. This led to Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger unveiling a new addition to the US doctrine to make it more credible. From 1974, limited war became an accepted part of the official posture. Political crisis, the growth of the conservative sentiment in the US, the post-Vietnam era, the growing Soviet power in Third World areas, the increasing might of Soviet nuclear forces, and the inability of the US to control situations beyond its borders made US public wholeheartedly in favour of militarization. This militarization was to take place at the strategic and conventional levels. It led to concepts like PD 59, and PD 18 which called for creating more capabilities to meet the Soviet threat.

The Reagan Administration coming into power at a time when American power was considered to be at its lowest, made militarization its immediate concern. This was to be done not by increasing their own arsenals but by forcing the Soviet Union into a costly confrontation in the arms race and also by economic denial. The ^aReagan Administration took advantage of America's position as a technology leader to attempt to push the arms race into a new direction. If this policy ever succeeded, defence not offense would become the key

stone of strategic policies of both the countries. The Soviets would have to take part in the race in the fear that by not doing so it would make them vulnerable to US first strike attack.

Thus limited nuclear war has virtually become an integral part of US doctrine. While the Soviets, on the one hand, deny that nuclear war could ever remain limited, they are not slow in preparing for limited nuclear on the other. Chapters II and IV would highlight this point.

Thus the object of this study is to try and understand the evolution of the strategic doctrines of the two super powers. Also an attempt is made in Chapter IV to bring to the forefront the influence of public opinion makers, the public opinion itself and academic experts on the formulation of the doctrine of limited nuclear war. It can be reasonably assumed that whenever the Soviets have caught up in terms of warheads, American public opinion is made more hostile to the Soviet intentions to gain support for new programmes that would ensure some kind of lead or even a new direction in the arms race. Secondly, the public opinion is also influenced on the nature of the Soviet threat. This is dependent on the military balance as perceived by the US officials and whether the Soviets have tried to influence movements in Third World countries.

Limited nuclear war, despite it being apparently illogical, has been made a part of the US doctrine, while the USSR prepares for it. It is this phenomenon that I will try to unravel and analyse.

CHAPTER - I

THE EVOLUTION OF THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC DOCTRINE

The end of World War II saw the most revolutionary development taking place - the exploding of Atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The relations between nations have not remained the same ever since. American strategic doctrine came into being. It had two motives - to contain Soviet power, which despite fluctuations, has endured ever since, and second, use the technological revolution to support 'containment' in the central zone of interest-Western Europe and also around the globe. The most striking thing about the advent of nuclear weapons, despite their enormous capabilities, is the clarity and stability they have imposed on super power relationship. Without the awesome spectre of nuclear devastation, it is less certain that peace would have survived confrontations over Berlin, Cuba or the Middle East. The nuclear problem did not freeze strategic manoeuvre but constrained it.

According to Richard Betts, there is a persistent tension in Western strategy which is the cause of the lack of agreement about how much mileage should be got from nuclear weapons.¹ Till recently, there was consensus in

1 Richard Betts, "Nuclear Weapons", in Joseph Nye Jr. ed., The Making of America's Soviet Policy, (New Haven 1984), p.97.

official Washington doctrines that the primary function of the US nuclear forces was to deter the Soviet threat either to the United States, Western Europe or its allies around the globe. With the advent of the Reagan Administration, there has been a shift in the emphasis in US strategic doctrine. While deterrence is still regarded as the cornerstone of US policy, the actual propositions put forward by conservative ideologues who are in Government, or advice outside of it, talk more about fighting a nuclear war over a protracted period and win.

Historical Evolution of US Nuclear Doctrines

The dramatic finale of World War II reinforced in US military thinking that airpower had finally come of age. There was the belief that the heavy bomber was the single delivery vehicle that had no truly effective defence against. War began to be thought of in a different way. It was now to be using "little" bombs to do the work of thousands of blockbusters. In November 1945, in his Final Report to the Secretary of War, General Arnold, the Chief of Air Staff, stated:

"The influence of atomic energy on air power can be stated very simply. It has made air

power all important... the only known effective means of delivering atomic bombs in their present state of development is the very heavy bomber.... This country... must recognize that real security... in the visible future will rest on our force to take immediate offensive action with overwhelming force. It must be apparent to the potential aggressor that an attack on the United States would be followed by an immensely devastating air attack on him." (2)

This was the first official statement on the future of the US nuclear doctrine. Though it was the result of the three wings of the US armed forces vying for greater allocation of resources it was yet a significant statement as to how the US would want to use the nuclear weapons over which it had complete nuclear monopoly when this report was being written. The US military intelligence though aware of the on going efforts of the Soviets in achieving the same capability, had put the date for the first detonation atleast 10 years away. Therefore, there was no need for the US strategic planners to contemplate how they would use the bomb against any enemy who also had it. But the essence of the US thinking was basically to deter war.

The first exposition of any doctrinal formulation

2 General Arnold, quoted in Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, (London 1983), p.23.

in US strategic thinking was made as late as 1954 by the then Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, who talked of "Massive Retaliation." He stated that "local defences must be reinforced by the further deterrent of Massive Retaliatory power."³ Though the idea of Massive Retaliation was propounded in 1954, the idea itself emerged from the germ of a 'New Look' policy which tried to look at the strategic question based on largely economic considerations. The New Look was begun with the incoming Eisenhower Administration in 1953. Not wishing to spend enormous amounts of money for defence in the fear of damaging the national economy in the long run, the Eisenhower Administration decided that severe budget constraints should be placed on the military in general. In addition, the main effort was to be made in the development of strategic air power in hopes of maximizing deterrence at minimum cost.⁴

The strategic rationale behind the doctrine of Massive Retaliation was based on its "great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our own choosing."⁵ Thus we find that the initial doctrine propounded was essentially a military consideration which stressed the importance of

3 Bernard Brodie, Strategy in the Missile Age, (Princeton N.J. 1959), p.248.

4 Ibid., p.250.

5 Ibid., p.250.

seizing and retaining the strategic initiative. Two points have to be kept in mind as to why a military consideration was taken. Firstly, the Soviet Union, despite exploding the atom bomb in 1949, had not been able to pile up significant stocks of such bombs giving the United States considerable advantage in the nuclear stockpile. Secondly, while considering as a military option, the US strategic planners, proceeded on the premise that the geographic insularity would be maintained. This resulted from the belief that the Soviets did not have any planes that could fly intercontinentally. Also the missile age, though envisioned, was predicted to be as far away as "25 years".⁶ Thus deterrence would be achieved by forcing the Soviet Union to consider the possibility that any local aggression they initiated might provoke a nuclear response by the US strategic air power on cities in the Soviet heartland.

This doctrine, despite the assumption of US superiority over the Soviet Union, had its critics who doubted it as a credible strategic doctrine on two fronts: the first was about the rationality of the doctrine itself. The doctrine was designed to deter the Soviet invasion of Western Europe. This threat had assumed dangerous proportions in the American

6 L. Freedman, n.2., p.27.

establishment. The mistrust that came about due to Soviet-American disagreement over Eastern Europe and Berlin, was read as an attempt by the Soviet Union to spread its march westward and engulf the whole of Western Europe under the spectre of communism. According to the critics the doctrine was not strong enough for the Soviets to believe that the Americans would actually use nuclear weapons and start an all out nuclear war. They quote examples of the Korean war, which preceded the Massive Retaliation doctrine. In this war, the United States seized the strategic initiative, but it also sought to keep the war "limited" by deliberately not attempting to carry the war beyond the bounds of the Korean peninsula. Another example quoted to "prove" its lack of credibility was the Soviet action in Hungary in 1956 and the "sabre.rattling" exercises in the Middle East and Berlin.⁷

Another point raised was that for the United States threat to be credible, it would have to remain invulnerable to retaliatory strikes by the enemy. By 1954, the Soviet Union which was steadily building up its nuclear arsenals had been able to project its power to attack the mainland of of the United States. Between 1945-1949, such a posture

7 R. Garthoff, Soviet Military Policy; A Historical Analysis, (London 1966), pp.112-114.

would have been considered credible. However, now, with the Soviets having rudimentary technology and one-way bombers the notion of invulnerability was in doubt. The United States could not emerge from such a confrontation with the Soviet Union unscathed.⁸

According to Brodie this systematic attempt by the critics of Massive Retaliation to de-emphasize its importance mostly belonged to the liberal establishment and the Democratic Party. It resulted in a gradual move toward the advocacy of the "tactical" use of lower yield nuclear weapons as a more believable response to local aggression.⁹ Another criticism that was brought against the strategy of Massive Retaliation was that despite the claims that the US would inflict upon the Soviet Union its full range of nuclear weapons, the fact was that the US did not have the bombs or the vehicles which were invulnerable, to attack the Soviet Union from the American continent. The B-36, B-47 and B-29 bombers the workhorses of the US air power had to be based in overseas bases in Britain and Western Europe in order to be in range of the Soviet heartland. Thus they felt that with such vulnerabilities, the preponderance of US strategic superiority would not be a credible

8 R. Bonds, ed., The Soviet War Machine, (New York 1976),

9 Brodie, n.3, pp.261-263.

deterrent to prevent the Soviet Union from occupying Western Europe, thus depriving the US of its bases.¹⁰

By 1957, there was a change in the official position of the US strategic policy. Dulles writing in Foreign Affairs, announced a modification in the strategic doctrine. The doctrine of Massive Retaliation gave way to a new concept called "graduated deterrence".¹¹ Thus the concept of limited was as part of the US doctrine finds mention in this phase for the first time. Limited war was to be an instrument in the policy of containment. Dulles, while arguing for more flexibility in the US doctrine wrote:

However, the US has not been content to rely upon a peace which could be preserved only by a capacity to destroy vast segments of the human race. Such a concept is acceptable only as a last alternative... In the future it may thus be feasible to place less reliance upon deterrence of vast retaliatory power. It may be possible to defend countries by nuclear weapons so mobile, or so placed, as to make military invasion with conventional forces a hazardous attempt. Thus...the nations which are around the Sino-Soviet perimeter can possess an effective defense against full scale conventional attack and thus confront any aggressor with the choice between failing or himself initiating nuclear war against the defending country..."(12)

10 Jonathan Lockwood, The Soviet View of US Strategic Doctrine, (New York, 1983), p.14.

11 John Foster Dulles, "Challenge and Response in US Policy", Foreign Affairs, Vol.36, No.1, October 1957, p.30.

12 Ibid., p.31.

This new idea that was proposed found adherents who tried to justify the development in the US doctrine as an important step towards making the US threat more credible. Henry Kissinger, who became the leading proponent of the doctrine of limited war gave three justifications for it.

- 1 Limited war represents the only means for preventing the Soviet bloc, at an acceptable cost, from over-running the peripheral areas of Eurasia.
- 2 A wide range of military capabilities may spell the difference between defeat and victory in an all out war.
- 3 Intermediate applications of US power offer the best chance to bring about strategic changes favourable to the United States.¹³ Thus Kissinger reasoned that limited war provided the means for the US to enforce its policy of containment at an acceptable cost.

A reason why the change in the doctrinal position was effected is that Massive Retaliation as a credible policy was becoming less and less effective against the enormously growing Soviet capability to retaliate against US attack. Under the Massive Retaliation doctrine, the US could respond to limited acts of aggression only with either in action or all out war. Massive Retaliation relied primarily on the

13 Henry Kissinger, Nuclear weapons and Foreign Policy, (New York 1958), p.125.

credibility of the US threat to strike the Soviet homeland in order to reduce the chance of local aggression ever occurring, which would permit the US to spend minimal amounts of her resources on the strengthening of conventional forces.¹⁴ Once the Soviets had developed in intercontinental ballistic missile capability, this threat was less believable because of increased US vulnerability to retaliation. An alternative to either waging all out war or simply doing nothing was needed in order to strengthen US deterrent power.

Limited war emerged not as a reaction to Massive Retaliation, but as a part, a supplement to the doctrine ostensibly to strengthen deterrence through the Massive Retaliation doctrine. The development of a limited war strategy required a wider range of military capabilities than the Massive Retaliation doctrine. While justifying the cause for a limited war doctrine, its most prominent advocates failed to take into account or ignored the fact that this doctrine also had another overriding concern. As Lawrence Freedman points out that by having a doctrine that required all round growth of the military capabilities, it was one way of curbing the economic squeeze that the American strategic programme had under gone. This squeeze resulted in the three arms of the US armed forces advocating doctrines that would justify greater spending for

14 M.W. Hoag, on Local War Doctrine, quoted in Lockwood, n.9., p.16.

their respective forces. The air power doctrine of the 1940's was an attempt by the Air Force to gain more funds for its forces.¹⁵ How would they get the Congress to allocate more funds for satisfying all the segments of the armed forces? Senator Arthur Vandenburg's advice to President Truman was that the only way to get the money from the Congress was to "scare the hell out of the American people."¹⁶ The most common technique of generating a sense of crisis is to invoke the spectre of advancing communism. This technique was used by President Truman to justify economic aid to Greece and Turkey in 1947. In explaining the need for the economic aid programme, President Truman argued that the United States would be unsuccessful "unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive moves that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States."¹⁷

This was precisely the strategy used for advocating

15 L.Freedman, n.2, p.29.

16 Walter La Feber, *American Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1971.* (New York, 1972), p.45.

17 Quoted in James Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks.* (New York, 1955), p.272.

the concept of limited war. Khrushchev's boasts about the burying of America under nuclear missiles was taken as evidence that the Soviets had moved ahead of the Americans in strategic weapons, which would threaten US positions all over the world and lead to the advance of international communism. Thus the "missile gap", in spite of the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations knowing that it was patent bluff, was used to get more funds allocated so as to ensure to all the wings of the armed forces a share in the cake.

Kissinger even argued that growth in limited war capabilities could provide victory even in the event of an all out war. Since it was possible that a nuclear exchange might result in the exhaustion of the strategic stockpiles of both sides, a premium would then be placed on other elements of military power in order to decide the victor.¹⁸ A capacity to wage limited war would, therefore, be valuable in the event of escalation to general war as well as in fighting limited wars. This reasoning would subsequently provide the basis for the even broader requirement of the doctrine of flexible response. Thus the function of limited war was described eloquently by Kissinger. It was to shift the risk of initiating an all out war to the Soviet Union by using the US

18 Kissinger, n.12, p.125.

capability for Massive Retaliation as a "shield" against Soviet initiation of nuclear war. This would enable the US to fight local actions on its own terms, inflicting local reverses against attempted Soviet gains.¹⁹

It is surprising that experts like Kissinger again failed to take into account the horrible effects of a general nuclear war. The US Army exercises 'Operation Sage Brush' and 'Carte Blanche' in the 1950s, were evidence enough to proof that even the use of limited nuclear weapons led the 'umpires' in the war games to declare that life had ceased to exist in the areas where these bombs were detonated. Without any known defense mechanism against the Soviet threat, the war scenarios that were evolved by Kissinger and other advocates had no meaning. It would be mutual suicide. Limited wars involved the imposition on oneself of limited means in order to attain correspondingly limited goals. This strategy become readily accepted in the US, mainly because the thought of actually having to employ nuclear weapons in an all out conflict had become an unthinkable prospect.²⁰ This doctrine as presented to the American public was shown to be more humane than the Massive Retaliation doctrine. The Soviet Union was shown as the aggressive power whose challenge

19 Ibid., p.127.

20 Brodie, n.3, pp.312-314.

had to be met at every level to save freedom and democracy. In attempting to do so, they coloured the Soviet Union's perception on war as what the Americans wanted them to do. However, a close analysis of Soviet pronouncements on limited war (to be discussed in a subsequent chapter) clearly show that it was quite the opposite. The Soviets viewed that entire spectrum of nuclear war as not being limited in any sense. They did not distinguish between limited war and general war and believed that any war which crosses the nuclear threshold would escalate into a general nuclear war.

The advent of the new Kennedy Administration in the United States, saw an energetic attempt towards giving the US strategic doctrine some degree of coherence and rationality. Although the limited war feature was to remain the centre point of the flexible response policy, yet new directions were attempted to be found by Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense. The principles of the doctrine of flexible response were formally declared by McNamara, in a speech before the American Bar Association on February 17, 1962.²¹ However the real foundation of flexible response was laid out by General Maxwell Taylor in his book, The Uncertain Trumpet. In the January 1961 issue of Foreign Affairs, General

21 J.E. Endicott and R.W. Stafford Jr., eds., American Defense Policy, (New York 1977), p.72.



Taylor wrote:

What are the principles which need to be asserted and accepted as the platform for a new military balance? The most obvious one, perhaps, is that world conditions have changed drastically since the adoption of "New Look" in 1953 and its supporting strategy of Massive Retaliation, and that a new programme is needed which will take the changes into account. Such a programme needs to be based on a flexible military strategy designed to deter war, large or small, and to assist the West in winning the Cold War", (22)

General Taylor, in his book The Uncertain Trumpet, postulated a US need to have the capability to "react across the spectrum of possible challenge." He felt it was necessary "to deter win quickly a limited war as to deter general war. Otherwise, the limited war which we cannot win quickly may result in our piecemeal attrition or involvement in an expanding conflict."²³ Taylor's motivation was also a more self-serving effort on behalf of the heretofore neglected US Army. By formulating a strategic doctrine that basically said:

It is better to have more of everything" he could cause more attention to be given to building up conventional forces as well, and the US Army would be the chief beneficiary.(24)

It was McNamara who further defined the need for "balanced forces". "As we develop a balanced, modern non-nuclear

22 Maxwell Taylor, "Security Will Not Wait", Foreign Affairs, Vol.39, No.2, January 1961, p.175.

23 General Maxwell Taylor, The Uncertain Trumpet, (New York 1959), p.5.

24 Lockwood, n.9, p.17.



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force, ready to move rapidly against aggression in any part of the world, we continue to inhibit the opportunities for the successful conduct of Khrushchchev's 'local wars! It is tempting to conclude that our conventional forces will leave us to compete with communism in the peaceful sphere of economic and social development, where we can compete most effectively".²⁵

McNamara was following the Taylor proposition of meeting the spectrum of threat when he proposed that to counter the "Communist insurgency" there was to be a proposed strategy of "counter-insurgency". While the flexible response was still taking state another powerful cross current was blowing in the Pentagon. There was a movement by "systems analysis" school who were looking for a more "organized" approach to planning military force level requirements, particularly for strategic forces. Their goal was to devise a theory that would provide a quantitative answer to the question "How much is enough?". This produced a clash between the flexible response doctrine which tended to push the requirements for strategic forces upwards, and the cost effectiveness calculations of the systems analysts, which pushed such requirements downwards.²⁶

25 Endicott and Stafford, p.20, p.73.

26 Ibid., p.73.

Flexible response which had its testing ground in Indo-China, was to provide the ideal condition for its success. However, Indo-China far from justifying flexible response, turned out to be a setback to American strategic doctrinal propositions. It died a quicker death than anticipated. In the following years, though the main features of flexible response were retained, the important difference was that nations under attack would have to bear the main burden of providing manpower.²⁷

While expounding the doctrinal propositions of flexible response, McNamara also devised several strategic nuclear concepts that have been able to influence the US nuclear doctrine long after flexible response disappeared from the scene. These concepts were-counterforce, damage limitation, assured ~~destruction~~ and escalation. Counterforce as a concept was introduced by McNamara at his now famous Ann Arbor speech in Michigan on June 16, 1962. The concepts of damage limitation and assured destruction were explained by him in statements before the Committee on Armed Services and the Sub-Committee on Department of Defense of the Committee on Appropriations, US Senate,^a 89th. Congress, 1st session, February 24, 1962.²⁸ The concept of escalation was given its theoretical birth by Herman Kahn in his book "On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios". Though this last concept was never

27 Lockwood, n.9, p.18.

28 Endicott and Stafford, n.29., pp.76-77.

officially a part of US strategic doctrine, it did have influential supporters within the successive Administrations which raised Soviet suspicions that the 'escalation model' of Herman Kahn could be employed by the US strategic forces in which case the object was to make nuclear war rational, and winnable. Hence the Soviets reacted to it harshly. The principal feature of this work was the 44 step "escalation ladder" which ran through the gamut of levels of conflict from the "pre crisis manoeuvring" to the ultimate paroxysm of violence, called the "spasm war". Herman Kahn who was earlier with the RAND Corporation left it in 1965 to form the Hudson Institute. He could be considered the high priest of the "classical strategy" which the Reagan Administration is following today.

While outlining the counterforce strategy, McNamara was to emphasize that with such a strategy the US and NATO had "overall nuclear strength adequate to any challenge confronting it" and that this strength not only minimizes the likelihood of major nuclear war but makes possible a strategy designed to preserve the fabric of our societies, if war should occur."²⁹ The essence of the counterforce strategy, in McNamara's words is that "the US has come to

29 Endicott and Stafford, n.20, p.74.

the conclusion that, to the extent feasible, basic military strategy in a possible general nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. This is to say, principal military objectives in the event of a nuclear war stemming from a major attack on the alliance, should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces, not his civilian population."³⁰ There were two important implications of the counterforce strategy as outlined by McNamara. The more significant of the two implications was that the United States would initiate a "pre-emptive" strike on Soviet nuclear forces in response to a "major attack on the alliance" and not merely as a response to a surprise attack on the United States. Given the opposition that this implication had, subsequently, references to first strike were played down in favor of a retaliatory posture. It was obvious that the Soviets viewed counterforce with alarm, believing that the Americans are changing their doctrinal structure from deterrence to war fighting. A second strike in this doctrine would be of no use as there would only be empty silos to hit in return for an attack by the enemy. Thus the obvious implications, despite it being played down, was that counterforce strategy was making the US think about

30 Ian Clark, Limited Nuclear War, (London), p.152.

the unthinkable. A second implication of this concept was "city avoidance." It meant that targeting of civilian population centres was not an end in itself. It would be the result of a possible escalation from a controlled and limited nuclear exchange that cities would be hit. Counterforce as a significant dominant concept remained only briefly and by 1964 the concepts of damage limitation and assured destruction began to gain prominence in US strategic doctrine. However it must be added that despite counterforce emerging briefly as the dominant theme in US strategic posture, it never lost its appeal on the theoretical level. It had powerful proponents and eventually by 1975 it found itself back into the US strategic doctrine.³¹

McNamara outlined the concepts of assured destruction and damage limitation in his speech before the Senate Committee on Armed Services in February 1965. "The first of these capabilities required to deter potential aggressor we call "assured destruction" i.e. the capability to destroy the aggressor as a viable society even after a well planned and executed surprise attack on our forces. The second capability we call "damage limitation" i.e. the capability to reduce the weight of the enemy attack by both

31 R. Bonds, The US War Machine, (New York 1978), p.61.

offensive and defensive measures and to provide a degree of protection for the population against the effects of nuclear detonations."³² When both these concepts are looked at with regard to counterforce and war avoidance, we find contradictions. When the damage limitation approach is linked to counterforce, it resembles more of a war fighting doctrine, which is based on the ability to survive a nuclear war.

The second concept of assured destruction led to war avoidance that relied on the threat to be able to inflict "unacceptable damage" on the Soviet Union. The rationale behind the adoption of the assured destruction capacity was due to two reasons. Firstly, given the influence of the systems analysts in the Pentagon, the assured destruction concept meant that it would be more cost effective and cheaper to implement than a nuclear war fighting strategy. With the concept, McNamara outlined what constituted "unacceptable damage." He defined it as "the capability to destroy one-quarter to one-third of the enemy's population and about two thirds of the enemy's industrial capacity." This was obviously a retreat from the initial definition of assured destruction, which was the ability "to destroy the enemy as a viable society."³³

32 Endicott and Stafford, n.20., p.75.

33 Lockwood, n.9., p.20.

A second implication was that with the growth in the Soviet arsenals, they had achieved parity by 1969, which forced the US to discard both damage limitation and counterforce. Both sides had made attempts towards evolving some attempts at limiting the damage to the population. However it was not successful. It would not only require vast sums of money but at the same time give no extra significant shelter to the population. Consequently, counterforce could not survive as a concept without damage limitation. The assured destruction strategy would later evolve into the doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction. The assumption behind this doctrine was that "both sides have the same general strategic assumptions." From this followed the reasoning that "our assured destruction problem is the other sides damage limiting problem and our damage limiting problem is their assured destruction problem."³⁴ Thus we find that the decade of the 1960s saw the US nuclear strategy making a gradual transition from the war fighting oriented strategies of counterforce and damage limitation to the war avoidance strategy of mutual assured destruction by the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The US nuclear doctrine underwent another change with the Nixon Administration. On February 17, 1972 Defense Secretary Melvin Laird formally outlined the new tenets of this doctrine. He stated:

34 Bonds, n.30., p.61-62.

"successful implementation of the strategy of realistic deterrence is, I believe, the most difficult and challenging national security effort this country has ever undertaken. This is so because we must move forward in an environment of virtual balance in the strategic nuclear field, and in the period of vigorous Soviet military expansion at sea, on the land, in the air, and in space. In addition, we must pursue our goal with due regard for the influences of today's other constraining realities—realities which I will talk at some length. He outlined these aspects of the defense strategy:

- 1 The US would keep all of its treaty commitments.
- 2 The US would 'provide' a shield if any nuclear power threatened the freedom of a nation allied with the US or of a nation whose survival the US considered vital to its security.
- 3 In cases involving 'other types of aggression' the US would furnish military and economic assistance when required and as appropriate. The US, however, would "look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.³⁵

The policy of realistic deterrence emphasized a shift from counterforce/damage limitation/escalation to deterring a strategic nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States. For theatre nuclear and other conventional conflicts, the US would share the burden of deterrence with its allies. Deterrence of communist insurgency wars was to

35 Endicott and Stafford, n.20., p.79.

be the main responsibility of the country being threatened, with the US providing only logistical support except in those cases where the US believed a vital interest was at stake.³⁶

The shift was evidenced in US strategic policy because of certain factors that affected the US both internally and externally. At the strategic level, the US through this change in policy tacitly acknowledged that the Soviet Union's military "catch up" had reached a stage where they had "rough parity" with American strategic forces not only in terms of the total warheads and megatonnage available to them but also with respect to technological advancement in making these doomsday weapons. An example of this technological catch up was the MIRVing of delivery vehicles. Kissinger has noted that the US did not include MIRVed capability in the terms of SALT I because of intelligence reports that the Soviets would require at least "ten years to perfect this technology." However, the Soviets managed their own system of MIRVed technology only three years later.³⁷ A second factor for this change in policy was due to the Vietnam quagmire that the Americans had got stuck in. With increased spending on conventional forces, and facing growing anti-involvement protests in the United States, the Administration was forced to take into account

36 Ibid., p.79.

37 Henry Kissinger, The White House Years, (New York) p.269.

the political consequences and reduce overseas commitment with respect to military aid and physical US presence in allied countries.

A third factor could be the declining popularity of Nixon, who came to the White House on a message of getting America out of Vietnam through "peace with honour". Thus counter insurgency that characterized the Vietnam involvement was no longer a valid justification for "keeping the boys" there.

With the Soviets catching up on the Americans, at least for the moment, the US doctrine saw this vital shift. In fact the official policy of the US strategic doctrine has been finely attuned to the growth of the Soviet arsenal. In the 1950s, the Soviet strategic programme being in its infancy, led the Americans to talk of Massive Retaliation. The preponderance of American power was overwhelming. However, the Khrushchev bluff, and concrete advances in Soviet strategic forces made the Americans again shift their policy from one that wholly depended on Massive Retaliation to one that keeping the Soviet threat in mind, talked of fighting small wars that could be controlled and won. This was an attempt to move in a direction in which they perceived the Soviets lagged behind. viz. technological advances. By making smaller nuclear warheads, the US wanted to thwart Soviet advances in heavy ICBM development.

By 1964, as the Soviets again caught up, the Americans re-emphasized their policy of mutual assured destruction and talked of the concept of "parity". By 1969, the policy was one of "essential equivalence". Thus MAD was projected as the official doctrine with a new term added to it, "crisis stability".³⁸ Thus the doctrine of MAD presumed that the US must have a second strike capability to deter an all out attack, on US strategic force with the objective of "providing no incentive for the Soviet Union to strike the US first in a crisis."³⁹ In a decade the American strategic doctrine had turned a full circle from Massive Retaliation to MAD both emphasizing targeting on cities to deter possible Soviet advances. However, there was one difference in the two strategies. While Massive Retaliation was to be used for all attempts by the Soviet Union to gain territory and influence at the cost of the US, MAD focussed on the strategic aspect of super power relations. Though counter force and damage limitation were given up as official doctrines, the US did maintain force structures that could be used if the doctrine ever came back into vogue.

There was a significant section of the American academic community that questioned the doctrine of MAD. It argued for counterforce as these experts felt that the US

38 Lockwood, n.9., p.21.

39 Endicott and Stafford, n.20., p.80.

did not have a significant capability to destroy Soviet missile silos. Also the Soviet civil defense programme, which was set up by the Soviets, not because they believed that it would reduce casualties in the event of a general war, but basically to reassure its population that it was taking efforts to save lives in case the "American imperialists decide to attack the Soviet Union", came in for criticism. These two points were raised to criticise MAD.

A newer set of concepts for a strategic doctrine resulted with James Schlesinger becoming the Secretary of Defense. In 1975, he outlined the main tenets of the new strategic posture that the US would follow:

- 1 A capability sufficiently large, diversified, and survivable so as to provide us at all times with high confidence of riding out even a Massive surprise attack and penetrating enemy defenses, and with the ability to withhold an assured destruction reserve for an extended period of time.
- 2 Sufficient warning to insure the survival of our heavy bombers together with the bomb alarm systems and command-control capabilities required by our National Command Authorities, to direct the employment of the strategic forces in a controlled, selective and restrained manner.
- 3 The forces to execute a wide range of options in response to potential actions by an enemy, including a capability for precise attacks on both soft and

hard targets, while at the same time minimizing unintended collateral damage.

- 4 The avoidance of any combination of forces that could be taken as an effort to acquire the ability to execute a first strike attack against the USSR.
- 5 An offensive capability of such size and composition that all will perceive it as in overall balance with the strategic forces of any potential opponent.
- 6 Offensive and defensive capabilities and programmes that conform with the provisions of current arms control agreements and at the same time facilitate the conclusion of more permanent treaties to control and if possible, reduce the nuclear arsenals."⁴⁰

It was a return to the 1950s war fighting strategy although this new doctrine contained new elements viz. launch on warning, and defensive shields against incoming missiles. The theme came back into vogue because technological advances were achieved by the US military industry in producing the Minuteman, Polaris, enhanced radiation weapon, and having smaller artillery shells that had nuclear tips which could cause destruction in local areas and help the advancing US armies in clearing the enemy troop

40 Ibid., p.87-88.

concentrations. This advance in technology made the US strategic thinkers give it political justification so as to make the new horrendous scenario a possibility. Schlesinger addressed this question when he said:

"Threats against the all forces, to the extent that they could be deterred by the prospect of nuclear retaliation, demand both more limited responses than destroying cities and advanced planning tailored to such lesser responses. Nuclear threats to our strategic forces, whether limited or large scale, might well call for an option to respond in kind against the attacker's military forces. In other words, to be credible and hence effective over the range of possibility contingencies, deterrence must rest on many options and on a spectrum of capabilities to support these options."(41)

Thus the USSR was again perceived of as a power that was going to act irrationally in starting a war. To take account of their apparent irrationality the US would have to make plans that would take into account all the possibilities of conflict that exist. Actually, the personal beliefs of Schlesinger, who, while at RAND wrote on limited war, and the pressures of technological advances in the armament industry forced this change on US policy. Politically the relations had yet to sour between the super powers. Angola Mozambique and the Horn of Africa were still in their initial stages of Soviet and proxy help. The US saw this Soviet move without protesting, but later on used the alarmist signals of Soviet aggressiveness to justify war

41 Ibid., n.20., p.85.

fighting doctrines and the theory of linkage.

It is also interesting that Schlesinger referred to the formerly discarded concept of damage limitation, particularly within the context of a war fighting scenario if deterrence failed. Although the assured destruction strategy was still in use, it was no longer an arbitrary measure of population fatalities. Instead, it was to be a gauge in terms of postwar political objectives that were relevant to a nuclear war. Deterrence was now a function of post-war political objectives; mainly, a reduction of the enemy's ability to recover quickly from the effects of a nuclear war and to attain a superior political-military position.⁴²

According to Bonds, the main reason for this shift in US strategic policy occurred because of the continuous growth of the Soviet nuclear forces, and their steadfast rejection of the notion of mutual assured destruction.⁴³ This is the typical argument given by the proponents of the Schlesinger doctrine. The Soviet public pronouncements have repeatedly stressed the fact that in nuclear age there cannot be control over the actions of war. These experts also admit that very little literature exists on the Soviet position of fighting a limited war, yet they see this lack of literature as cover

42 Lockwood, n.9., p.24.

43 R.Bonds, n.30., p.66.

up of the real motives of the Soviet military doctrines. They point to the existence of Soviet tactical missiles like Frogman and Scud which could also be equipped with nuclear missiles. Thus by giving political colouring to Soviet motives, the US military establishment is able to justify increased spending on newer weapons.

The logic behind the Limited Nuclear Options was two-fold: Firstly, it was designed to introduce more flexibility into the available range of options for the use of strategic nuclear weapons so that in a crisis the President could theoretically order the selective use of nuclear weapons on military targets in the USSR. Secondly, the purpose of war was to strengthen the overall credibility of the US deterrence strategy, which was thought to have been eroded by continued reliance on all out nuclear response as embodied in the concept of MAD.

With the firing of James Schlesinger by President Ford, in 1976, the Limited Nuclear Options were sidetracked. The hiatus in US strategic doctrine was rectified by the Presidential Directive 59 of Jimmy Carter announced in August 1980.

Presidential Directive 59:

In a speech to the Naval War College, on August 20, 1980, Defense Secretary Harold Brown laid down the Carter Administration's new concept of nuclear strategy: "The over-

riding concern of US strategic nuclear forces is to deter nuclear war, for which three requirements must be met. First, we must have strategic nuclear forces that can absorb a Soviet first strike and still retaliate with devastating effect. Second, we must meet our security requirements and maintain an overall strategic balance at the lowest level and most stable level. Third, we must have a doctrine and plans for the use of our forces (if they are needed) that make clear to the Soviets the hard reality that, by any course leading to nuclear war, they could never gain an advantage that would outweigh the unacceptable price they would have to pay. The ability of our forces to survive a surprise attack is the essence of deterrence."⁴⁴ To Brown, PD 59 was "a codification of previous statements of strategic policy. PD 59 took the same essential strategic doctrine and restated it more clearly, more cogently in the light of current conditions and current capabilities."⁴⁵ (Further details on PD 59 as a strategic warfighting doctrine are given in Chapter IV.) Suffice it to say, that this doctrine was another logical step in the evolution of US strategic doctrines.

The advent of the Reagan Administration in the United States, has led to newer areas being opened up for scrutiny

44 The American Atom: A Documentary History gives clear policies from the Discovery of fission to the present--1939-1984, (Philadelphia 1984), p.221.

45 Stewart Manual, "Changing concepts of Nuclear War", Conflict Studies, No.125, December 1980, p.4.

and it seems likely that they would go further than the Carter Administration's notion of warfighting deterrence. Ronald Reagan has come into the White House with the thesis that a "protracted nuclear war" is possible and that in the eventuality of a war, US nuclear forces must prevail and be able to force the Soviet Union to cease hostilities on terms favourable to the US.⁴⁶

In the past decade, American strategy, force planning and employment policy have all moved in the direction of warfighting deterrent posture. War fighting has become the conventional wisdom which has evolved during the Presidencies of Nixon, Ford Carter and Reagan. This new position of "war winning" is most prominently associated with the writings of Colin S. Gray.⁴⁷

The shift from counter value to counter force strategy reflects the advances in weapon technology, increase in accuracy of delivery systems and use of non-conventional sources of defence e.g. Strategic Defense Initiative. By again stressing on the superiority factor in relation to the Soviets, the Reagan Administration is trying to channelise the competition into fields where the Americans are far superior. By improving missile accuracy, guidance systems etc.,

46 Robert C. Gray, "The Reagan Nuclear Strategy", Arms Control Today, Vol.13., no.2, March 1983, pp. 1-3, 9-10.

47 see Colin S. Gray and Keith Payne, "Victory is Possible", Foreign Policy, no.39, Summer 1979, pp.19-27.

the Americans have created the belief that technology could dictate the course of the next nuclear war between the US and the USSR. Here again another rationale for re-emphasizing counterforce strategy is that most of the advancements that have taken place have been a result of the enormous amounts that have been spent on Research and Development in the 1970s. Hence for the vast expenditures borne by private organisations there has to be the expectation of orders for such products. So the doctrine emphasizes in a way in which these new weapons are allocated funds by the Congress. For the Congress to allocate funds, there has to be a "scare effect" on the American people as a whole. This is done by portraying the Soviet gains as expansionist in nature and that this would result in communism engulfing the whole of the Third World, if the US cannot stop the Soviets. They are also depicted as a dictatorship that has no belief in the credibility of the US strategic forces. Hence force planning of US arsenals have to be done "to meet the entire spectrum of risk". Nuclear weapons become an integral part of the US military options. The useability of the nuclear weapons is rated high. Proponents of such a strategy like Albert Wohlstetter and Herman Kahn, questioned American reliance on deterrence

and pointed to the eventuality of nuclear war.⁴⁸

Wohlstetter attacked deterrence on the grounds that it would not be able to itself remove the danger of accidental outbreak or limit the damage in case deterrence failed. Kahn was more explicit, asserting that forces for deterrence might not suffice and that the US had to prepare to fight a nuclear war. By having options for any contingency, the Soviet Union would be deterred. This doctrine also calls for strategic superiority which has political significance. "America's perceptions of their country's relative standing, (and) perceptions of others ... rest in part... upon the assessments of the state of strategic nuclear balance. Nobody knows, with any confidence, how a World War III would terminate.... But every body knows which way the balance is tending and this ... contribution to a constricting of American freedom of foreign policy action."⁴⁹

Thus the strategic nuclear policy followed by the Reagan Administration seems to be an extension of the countervailing strategy inaugurated by the Carter Administration. This doctrine would mean more of a fighting stance than PD 59 in view of its explicitly stated goal of winning a protracted nuclear war. The Reagan approach to nuclear strategy has been spelt out by Richard Halloran in the New York Times. "The US must have a capacity to render ineffective

48 Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror", Foreign Affairs, January 1959, pp.221-234.

49 Colin S. Gray, The Soviet American Arms Race, (New York 1976, p.133.

the total Soviet and allied military and political power structure through attacks on the political and military leadership and associated control facilities, nuclear and conventional military forces and industry critical to military power.

"It is essential that the US possesses nuclear forces that will retain throughout a protracted conflict and afterward the capability to inflict very high level of damage against the industrial and economic base of the Soviet Union and her allies so that they have a strong incentive to seek conflict termination short of an all out attack on US cities and economic assets.

"Command and control facilities must be improved to a point where they are capable not only of "supporting controlled nuclear attacks over a protracted period" but of maintaining links with those SLEM forces which would be held in reserve throughout the conflict."⁵⁰ The Defense Guidance allegedly states that should deterrence fail and strategic nuclear war occur, the US must prevail and be *able* to force the Soviet Union to seek earliest termination of hostilities on terms favourable to the US.⁵¹

50 Richard Halloran, "Reagans' Nuclear Strategy", (New York Times), May 30, 1982.

51 Robert Gray, n.46, p.9.

Colin S. Gray has argued that the US nuclear policy needs a strategy in the sense of specific political objectives to be achieved in war. In his view, nuclear strategy is "a combination of counterforce offensive targeting, civil defense and ballistic missile and air defense... (to) hold US casualties down to a level compatible with national survival and recovery."⁵²

This in short has been the evolution of US nuclear strategy since the dawn of the nuclear age till the Reagan Administration which through its controversial "Stars Wars" programme is trying to give the defense oriented strategy a new character of "offense-defense".⁵³ This strategy is bound to have repercussions on the level of the strategic balance. The exact nature would only be determined by the passage of time.

52 Colin S. Gray and Keith Payne, n.46, p.14-27.

53 Time, June 23, 1985, p.6.

Chapter - II

THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET NUCLEAR DOCTRINE

This chapter would discuss various aspects of Soviet military thought, the strategies that they have adopted to counter American threat perceptions and how this has evolved into a doctrinal framework.

At the outset it must be made clear that both the super powers use certain concepts and words that have totally different connotations in their respective countries. An example of such antithetical perceptions and meanings is the very term "military doctrine". In the United States, this is a very flexible word. It means different things to different people. There is national doctrine, allied doctrine, Army doctrine, Air Force doctrine and tactical nuclear doctrine. In contrast, in the Soviet Union, there is only one and that is the official Soviet military doctrine. This doctrine is defined promulgated and worked out in conjunction with the political leadership. It represents their guidance to the military in preparing for war.¹ The best exponece of the guidance of Soviet military doctrine is found in the classic "Military Strategy" by Marshal Sokolovskiy. It states:

military doctrine is the expression of the accepted views of the State regarding the problems of political evaluation of future war, the State attitude toward war, a determination

1 Joseph Douglass Jr., Soviet Theatre Nuclear Offensive, (Washington DC, 1976), p.9.

of the nature of future war, preparation of the country for war in the economic and moral sense and regarding the problems of organization and preparation of the armed forces as well as the methods of waging war. Consequently, by military doctrine one should understand the system of officially approved, scientifically based views on the fundamental problems of war. (2)

A military doctrine is worked out and determined by the political leadership of the State. This in effect means that the vanguard of the Soviet State, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its Central Committee work out Soviet military doctrine. This promulgation can be found in books like Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army, Methodological Problems of Military Theory and Practice, and Officer's Handbook.

According to Joseph Douglass, military doctrine in the Soviet Union is a part of the Soviet military thought, whose other component is military science. While the doctrine is used to prepare the country for war, it also identifies the nature of war, and the priority tasks and problems. Military science is a unified system "of knowledge on the preparation and conduct of armed conflict in the interests of the defense of the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries against aggression". Within military science, strategy is the most important element.³ Also the interaction between and differences in military doctrine and military science are important. While

2 V.D.Sokolovskiy, Soviet Military Strategy, trans., Rand Corp., H. Dinnerstein, L. Goure, and T. Wolfe, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963, p.38.

3 Joseph Douglass, n.1, p.11.

military doctrine guides military science, military doctrine also is developed using the conclusions of military science.⁴ There are also three vital differences between the doctrine and science as perceived by the Soviets. Firstly, military science focusses on the past, present and future, while doctrine is pointed to the present and immediate future; that is to foresee the nature of war and the probable enemy in order to provide guidance to military science regarding the course to follow. Secondly, "doctrine being developed and accepted by the State, is a single system of views and a guide to action free from any particular subjective views and evaluations. Inherent in science, in its development, is the struggle of opinions. In the system of military theories which comprise science there may be several different points of view, different scientific ideas, and original hypotheses which are not selected by doctrine for practical application and they thereby do not acquire the character of official State views on military questions".⁵ The difference between military doctrine and military science with regard to official acceptability has to be clarified at the outset because there is a prevailing view in the US strategic community according to which all articles that appear in Soviet journals are either

4 V.D.Sokolovskiy, Soviet Military Strategy, trans., Harriet Past Scott, 3rd. 1968 ed., (New York 1975), p.38.

5 S.N. Kozlov, Spravochnik Ofitsera, trans., (Moscow 1971), US Air Force, Foreign Technology Division, AD 733-207, 1971, p.115.

distortions or propaganda not to be taken seriously enough, but at the same time being good enough to be quoted to show the "real views" of the Soviet military doctrine. It is to be admitted that any discussion about national security is limited but by no means is it banned from public circulation. There certainly are differences in perceptions and strategy as enunciated by different power groups. They cannot be held as official views just because they are aired. Their primary function is to inform members of the Soviet armed forces about the weapons systems organization, strategy and tactics of probable opponents and their own response to it.

Soviet Perceptions and Responses to
"Imperialist" Threat:

Perceptions among nations are not just a product of the present state of relations between them but they are accumulated views that each country has of the other during their co-habitation as sovereign States. When we view Soviet perceptions of the American threat we have to keep this vital fact in mind.

The birth of the Soviet State itself brought about a harsh reaction from the Western powers. They perceived the creation of an ideological State, whose ideology openly talked of the "irreconciliability" of two opposing social systems. War was to be an instrument to assist the Socialist

forces in bringing down the edifice of "imperialism". To this the Western powers reacted with open support to the "white army" made up of pro-royalists in their effort to destabilise an inherently dangerous regime. Over the years this singular fact has been burned into the consciousness of the Soviet citizen.

As George Kennan, former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union was to observe, "The Soviet regime has always been marked by a whole series of characteristics that complicated, and were bound to complicate, its relations with the West. Some of these were inherited."⁶ He goes on to say that the estrangement with the West has always been there since the time of the Grand Duchy of Moscow, which was eternally "suspicious of the heretical foreigner". However, the Russian Revolution, occurring in the agony of the First World War, intensified this estrangement as a result of substituting a "militant ideological antagonism for the onetime religious abhorrence of the West, and discovering a new form of dangerous heresy in the Marxist vision of Capitalism".⁷

Given the Soviet experience in the Stalinist purges and the devastations of the Second World War, the Soviet regime as it regained its vitality was marked by a relatively high sense

6 George Kennan, "The State of US-Soviet Relations", The Choice: Nuclear Weapons Versus Security, ed. Gwyn Prins (London, 1984), p.131.

7 Ibid., p.131.

sense of insecurity. It has resulted in a tendency to overdo its military strength and is unduly sensitive to the slightest influence or involvement of outside powers in regions just beyond its borders. With such an imprint of history etched into its consciousness, they have come to view the US as a "dedicated" enemy of the Soviet Union. Their perceptions are coloured by these memories they hold of the Western countries. However it should be noted that the centrality of the United States in Soviet foreign policy should not be exaggerated. Dealing with other items was also crucial though the US occupied the top position on Soviet foreign policy agenda. Other considerations that Moscow had was the consolidation and maintenance of its hold over Eastern Europe and the troubled Chinese connection. Nor was it going to sacrifice its advantages in the Third World to gain greater American recognition and cooperation.⁸

Another perception that the Soviets have always entertained about the United States is the feeling of being threatened and victimized. This feeling stems right from the end of the war. For the Soviets, the bloody victory achieved over Germany was in part a vindication of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and at the same time the beginning of a search for acceptance by the United States of equality as a world power for the Soviet Union.

⁸ Dimitri K. Simes, "Soviet Policy toward the United States", in Joseph S. Nye Jr., ed., The Making of America's Soviet Policy (New Haven, 1984), p.291.

However, the US policy of containment was unacceptable to Kremlin, which felt that this was another attempt on the part of the "imperialist" power to limit its freedom for geopolitical manoeuvre and challenge to the legitimacy of the Marxist-Leninist promise of world revolution. It also felt that it was an attempt by the capitalist powers to put the Soviet Union into a straitjacket, and attempt to reduce its hold over East Europe. This challenge to its own perceived sense of security and international ambitions by the Western powers led by the US made the USSR take a fundamentally adversarial attitude towards the US.⁹

Other factors that led in part to the heightened sense of insecurity by the Soviets was that wartime cooperation came to a standstill and the Americans through the Marshall Plan and Truman Doctrine attempted to restrict Moscow's momentum in East Europe. Also it must be remembered that the Americans held monopoly over the atomic bomb which according to Soviet suspicion, was intended to threaten and to blackmail the USSR. Finally, the Soviet Union realized that the end of World War II brought about a fundamental change in the leadership of the imperialist world. Britain and France were overshadowed by the U.S., which through its global power-projection capabilities would become the Soviets main challenge in the continents of

9 A. Arbatov, Bezpasnost V. Yaderni Vek I Politika Vashingtona (Security in the Nuclear Age and the Policy of Washington) Moscow: Politizdat, 1980, quoted in Dimitri Simes, n.8, p.292.

Africa and Asia.¹⁰ Politically, the Soviets view the US and NATO as a "dedicated, implacable, devious, and sometimes confused threat. Imperialists are dedicated enemies of the Soviet Union".¹¹

Geographically, the Soviets perceive the threat to be very near. NATO is on one border and the People's Republic of China on another. To the Soviets, NATO has two centres: Federal Republic of Germany and the US. The Soviets perceive West Germany to be a hotbed of tension and militarism in Europe. They are extremely wary of the West Germans being the fulcrum of NATO response in Europe.¹² Consequently they perceive that any attack on the Soviet Union would come through NATO. Given the concept of "extended deterrence" as enunciated by the United States, the Soviets do not regard any strategic conflict as happening independent of its NATO allies. They feel that NATO's internal tensions will make the Washington axis stronger leading to a more likely probability of war taking place. They also believe that surprise will be the most likely strategy followed by the US and its NATO allies when they attack the Soviet Union. The only

10 Marshall D. Shulman, Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised, (New York, 1969), pp. 264-266.

11 William T. Lee, "Soviet Perceptions of the Threat and Soviet Military Capabilities" in Graham D. Vernon, ed., Soviet Perceptions of War and Peace (Washington D.C., 1981), p. 68.

12 Colonel D. Ivanov, "The hotbed of Militarism and Tension in Europe", Military Thought No. 7 (1967), pp. 73-77.

remedy that the Soviets believe in, according to their declaratory policy is preemption. Failing which retaliate. It is interesting to note that these two themes in Soviet military thought have remained unchanged since the advent of the nuclear age. This has been so, despite the fact that the United States over the last two decades has tried to integrate into its doctrinal (official) propositions escalatory trends primarily to assure the Soviet Union of its intentions. The *raison d'etre* for preemption in an age when both powers are equipped with overkill capacity is defeated.

Soviet fears of the People's Republic of China go far beyond China's currently modest capabilities. They fear more geographically and ethnically the vulnerable and exposed borders in the Central Asia and Siberia to Chinese incursions. In the longer run, the Chinese nuclear capability, also has special concerns for the Soviets. This fear when coupled with the possibility of an entente between the United States, a pragmatic China and Japan cause it nightmares. At the same time, the Soviets view Japan as an equally serious threat.¹³

With regard to Soviet perceptions about the Third World, three observations can be made. Firstly, beyond the US/NATO/China/Japan axis they do not perceive any serious threat from any other country. Secondly, they are as much concerned as the US on the proliferation of nuclear weapon making technology in

13 William T. Lee, n.11, p.72.

the Third World. Thirdly, there is a tacit understanding between the super powers that Third World conflicts should not lead to super power conflict in their homelands. Thus the Soviets have been careful in dealing with the inevitable connection between their behaviour in the Third World and their relations with the United States.¹⁴

Soviet Military Perceptions:

It must be pointed out at the outset that the range of differences in attitudes toward war is not as great in the Soviet Union as in the US and secondly, the Soviet view of war is different from the American view of war. In the Soviet Union, war and the threat to its national security are both a first hand memory for many older citizens and an on going publicizing effort on the part of the Soviet Government to let those who did not see the horrors of war not to forget that security of the homeland is the most patriotic duty for every Soviet citizen. It also helps to justify any increased spending on military preparedness. Due to this experience-cum-policy there is a broad spectrum of support for the Kremlin's leadership in building and maintaining military power.¹⁵ Thus for the people of the Soviet Union war is always a very real

14 Dimitri Simes, n.8, p.309.

15 An example of keeping the horrors of war alive was the naming of two "hero-cities" in the 1970s. Novorossiysk in 1973 and Tula in 1977 received this award, called by Brezhnev "the highest award of the Motherland".

possibility and hence policies of the Soviet Government that purport to avoiding war are accepted by a wide section of the population. To Ken Booth, there is also another aspect to the emphasis on military preparedness. The Bolsheviki in 1917, inherited a rich military tradition. As the new State was created out of chaos ensuing from the War, military power became basic to Soviet rule. Also patterns of previous history impinge directly on the societal values that the Russians hold. Martial values were predominant ones at several important junctures. There was a tradition of wearing uniforms and developing weaponry."¹⁶ "Traditional insecurity produced by invasions of Mongols, Poles, Swedes, French and Germans, and pride in great Russian campaigners like Kutuzov and Surkov, made Russians more receptive to a positive role for the military in society. The roots of a deep sense of inferiority with respect to the "outside" world were firmly embedded in the Russian psyche, a siege mentality evolved, and a millennium of Russian history testified that any outward projections of Russian influence were possible only from a position of strength."¹⁷

Ever since the inception of the Soviet State, military force has been integral to Soviet rule. Civil war, foreign

16 Ken Booth, "Soviet Defense Policy" in John Baylis et. al, Contemporary Strategy: Theories and Policies, (New York 1975), p.74.

17 Steve F.Kime, "The Soviet View of War", Comparative Strategy, Vol.2,, No.3., 1980, p.51.

military intervention, economic chaos and famine, called for the military to play a supporting role to the new Republic. With the military becoming the back bone for the existence of the fledgling State, its leaders particularly Lenin and later on Stalin subdued it to the 'diktats' of the Communist Party. The military from now on became an important support of the ideology and strategy adopted by the political leadership but was controlled by the CPSU through the system of political commissars. As Steve Kime put it, "The very legitimacy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union became inextricably intertwined with the achievements of Soviet military power."¹⁸ Thus from the Soviet point of view the history of the last sixty years has been one in which the people, the military and the Party acting as one to surmount incredible obstacles and attempt to emerge victorious... Soviet military power is the primary medium in which patriotism and the Soviet form of rule are mixed. As Marshal A.A.Grechko, former Defense Minister of the Soviet Union said, "The War provided a convincing demonstration of the mighty power of the Socialist State and the political system."¹⁹

This particular enduring legacy of the Soviet State has to be kept in mind when one discusses the Soviet views on the nuclear arms race and security. Their view of deterrence is

18 Ibid., p.54.

19 A.A.Grechko, The Armed Forces of the Soviet State, (Moscow, 1974), p.74.

very one sided. They believe that deterrence is something they have to force to the US and NATO because they perceive that the West is always looking for ways to attack them. Put in another way, it means that deterrence is less stable if the Soviets are militarily inferior, it is somewhat stable when there is parity and more stable when there is military superiority. As James Reston noted,

The Soviet attitude toward the question of a military balance also interested members of the US team in Vienna. 'They seem to have a different idea of what's a proper balance than we do; one US delegate said: 'They may feel that if NATO has enough power to repel a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, that is an imbalance. And they feel the same way about the strategic balance. (20)

The Soviet military policy perceptions are basically derived from the military doctrine and strategy for the nuclear age. Except for modifications of certain tenets, the objectives of Soviet military power have been relatively stable over the last two decades. To the Soviets there are three objectives for the Soviet military in the nuclear age. The first objective is to deter a US/NATO attack. They place a premium on military security. The second being to acquire a total military and economic posture capable of fighting and winning a nuclear war should their policy of "peaceful co-existence" fail. The Soviets, it seems, obviously plan for survival and victory

20 James Reston, "Watching Mr. Brezhnev in Vienna", Washington Post, 26 June 1979.

in the nuclear age. This has led to many of its critics challenging the very peaceful intent of Soviet military doctrine. They claim that, on the one hand, the Soviets have always claimed that there cannot be any victors or vanquished in a nuclear exchange, yet their doctrinal propositions always take account of the fact that in case of attack they must not only retaliate but gain victory over their opponents. A typical comment on Soviet retaliatory postures is "The Russian mind understands 'mutual assured destruction' for its political utility: it is simply not good military strategy."²¹ The third objective is to achieve "superiority" over the enemy by fielding larger numbers of more effective weapons. The argument that the Soviets are engaged in the search for superiority is buttressed by quoting assertions from within the Soviet defense establishment that a nuclear war can be won.²² Firstly, such assertions are not common, moreover the politico-military leadership has asserted from time to time that the primary function of the Soviet forces is to deter a general nuclear war rather than fight and win one.²³ Jukes is of the opinion that the primary function of the two alliance systems is to deter war and if unsuccessful in deterring it, win it.

Assertions by the professional military leadership of any country is usually related to the winning of a hypothetical war.

21 Steve F.Kime, n.17, p.57.

22 A frequent article cited is by Colonel Rybkin, "Kommunist Vooruthennykh Sil" (Armed Forces Communist) September 1963.

23 Examples are numerous, like Leonid Brezhnev speech in Tula, Pravda and Izvestia, 19 January 1977. Quoted in Geoffrey Jukes, "Soviet Strategy" in Strategy and Defense ed.Desmond Ball (Sydney, 1982), p.188.

After all that is what the troops and weapons are for. Also, according to Jukes, in most countries, including the Soviet Union, the decision whether or not to initiate a war is a political act, not a military one, though the military would be consulted for assessing capabilities. It is inconceivable that the views of the middle ranking officers on the 'winnability' of a nuclear war would be crucial in the Soviet decision making process. It is basic to the position of both major alliances that nuclear war, if it cannot be averted, can be won, and assertions of the need for Western military superiority in order to ensure the winning of such wars as cannot be prevented pass almost without question to their wisdom.²⁴ The major Western powers are at present engaged in increasing their defence expenditure with a view to retaining their military superiority they see as having been eroded. "It is only commonsense to assume that the Soviets are as worried about potential Western superiority as the West is about potential Soviet superiority".²⁵

As Benjamin Lambeth concedes, given the material on Soviet military doctrine, it is difficult to discern any authoritative pattern of thinking and acting in a crisis situation. He also feels that the rhetoric of "winnability" of nuclear war

24 International Herald Tribune (Paris), 18-19 July 1981, p.3.

25 Geoffrey Jukes, n.23, p.189.

is for other reasons. "It serves the important purpose of describing and explicating Soviet operational concepts: educate the Soviet Officer corps, justify Soviet military programmes in the internal bureaucratic and budgetary arena... at best (this material) offers a rough portrait of Soviet thought about the probable character of a future nuclear war".²⁶

Evolution of Soviet Strategic Doctrine:

There could be three distinct phases in the process of evolution of a Soviet strategic doctrine. The first phase coincided roughly with the end of the Second World War and lasted till the death of Josef Stalin in 1953. This was characterized by a stagnation in Soviet military thinking. There were two reasons offered for this surprising lack of understanding of the nuclear age. One reason was that since the Soviets initially did not possess the atomic weapon and even after 1949 they had very limited capability to manufacture "crude" devices, they did not feel the need to change their already enunciated strategy which they had adopted during the course of the Second World War. A second reason which in the event of the circumstances was more probable was the overshadowing presence of Stalin on the Soviet stage.

26 Benjamin Lambeth, "On Thresholds of Soviet Military Thought", in William Taylor, Steven Maaranen and Gerrit Gong, Lexington, Mass, eds., Strategic Responses to Conflict in the 1980's, (Lexington, Mass. 1984), p.174.

During this period all commentaries in Soviet publications dealt with a reiteration of the lessons of the past war and a continuous exposition of what came to be known as Stalin's "permanently operating factors" of war. Stalin's view was that war was a massive social phenomenon in which the strength of two or more societies were pitted against each other. Since war was a social phenomenon, it followed that it was subject to the laws that governed the development of society itself. Within such a context, Stalin claimed, the permanently operating factors would decide the outcome of the war, and not such "transitory" factors as surprise. These permanently operating factors were "stability of the rear, morale of the army, the quantity and quality of divisions, the armament of the army, the organizational ability of the army commanders".²⁷

It was obvious that Stalin was referring to the concept that the superior side was the one which had the permanently operating factors. However in the nuclear war, superiority of the permanently operating factors was of secondary value as the quality of war had undergone basic changes. In the Soviet Union, Stalin's ideas served to prohibit any public discussion of foreign military thought on a serious basis. This situation was true till 1954.²⁸ There have been many versions

27 H.S.Dinerstein, War and the Soviet Union (New York, 1959), pp.5-7.

28 R.Garthoff, Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age (New York, 1958), p.70.

as to why Stalin refused to discuss foreign military strategy. The one most plausible was put forward by Henry Kissinger and R.Bonds. They felt that Stalin perceived the need to steer the Soviet Union through a period in which the US had virtual nuclear monopoly. This he intended to do by publicly downplaying the significance of the nuclear weapon and instead emphasizing those elements of Soviet power in which they had the biggest advantages.²⁹ Another view that emerged was that Stalin in order to counter act the nuclear monopoly was trying to make the Soviet land armies an effective "counter weight" to US strategic air power. By holding Western Europe hostage, the USSR had a credible deterrent against the US advantage.³⁰

The second phase in the evolution of Soviet strategic doctrine begins with the death of Stalin in March 1953. It was for the first time that Soviet military strategists were openly able to air their differences about the permanently operating factors of Stalin. The first step towards a reappraisal was taken by Major General N.A.Talensky in September 1953 when writing in the *Voennaia Mysl'* talked about the possibility of "decisive defeat in a limited time of one or another opponent."³¹ This was the opening salvo which began

29 Henry Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, (Garden City, N.Y., 1958), pp.93-96. Also see R.Bonds ed., The Soviet War Machine (New York, 1976), p.202.

30 Tom Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 (Baltimore, 1970), pp.32-35.

31 H.Dinerstein, n.27, p.41.

a critical reappraisal of Soviet military doctrine and which ended three years later in rejecting Stalin's concept of permanently operating factors as "old-fashioned".³² Yet, there was a distinction in perceptions of the two super powers about the nature of the atom bomb. While the Americans considered it to be the absolute bomb, the Soviet strategists felt that it could aid in achieving decisive results.³³ This post-Stalin period saw the emergence of a debate within the strategic community on how much emphasis should be placed on the use of nuclear weapons. Ranged on one side were those who believed that heavy reliance should be placed on nuclear weapons as a means of achieving decisive results on the battlefield. On the other side, were those who claimed that "weapons of mass destruction not only require mass armed forces but require their inevitable increase."³⁴

This period also saw changes that took place in the armed forces doctrine, in which replacements were sought to reduce heavy concentrations of manpower, which were potentially fatal in the nuclear age with much higher concentrations of fire power and mobility per man, a re-examination of the

32 Ibid., p.53-54.

33 R. Garthoff, n.28., p.76-78.

34 Ibid., p.79.

naval programme which resulted in the almost complete cessation of naval construction for four years from 1957 and resumption of a construction programme on a much reduced scale but with a great deal more innovativeness in design, including the first use of gas turbine propulsion in large warships. The period was also marked by widespread introduction of missiles of various types into both the submarine and surface forces. To the traditional "element" forces of land, sea and air were added two "mission oriented" armed services, the Air Defence of the Homeland (PVI Strany), set up in 1955, and following the introduction of strategic rockets, the creation of autonomous Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) in late 1959.³⁵ Another change attributed to the doctrinal development was that of the Soviet estimation of the value of strategic surprise. The initial contentions were somewhat inconsistent simultaneously claiming the primacy of the permanently operating factors while also suggesting that a surprise attack with nuclear weapons might determine the course, and possibly the outcome, of the entire war.³⁶ By May 1955, this issue was resolved with the editorial of *Voennaya Mysl'* stating that "the task is to work out seriously all sides of this question and above all to

35 G. Jukes, n.23., p.186.

36 H. Dinerstein, n.27., p.183.

elaborate ways and means of warning of surprise attack by the enemy and of dealing to the enemy pre-emptive blows on all levels - strategic, operational and tactical.³⁷ Thus the Soviets had settled on the adoption of a pre-emptive strike strategy to be used in the event that an attack by the US appeared imminent. The doctrine officially enunciated by Khrushchev was one of "limited deterrence", which relied on a modest number of intercontinental ballistic missiles targeted on American cities, with a much larger force of medium and intermediate-range missiles and bombers targeted on Europe.³⁸

The third phase of the doctrinal development that has shown a relatively stable outlook came p up in the 1960s. It could be divided into two main periods: (1) the period leading up to Khrushchev's ouster in 1964 from the initial enunciation of his strategic doctrine in January 1960 and (2) the Brezhnev-Kosygin period of doctrinal development to 1970. The first period differed from the second significantly in doctrine and force requirements.

Khrushchev made his new doctrinal declaration on January 14, 1960, which along with the then Defense Minister Malinovsky's declarations, placed its main emphasis on the

37 Jonathan S. Lockwood, The Soviet View of US Strategic Doctrine, (New Brunswick 1983), p.30.

38 N.S. Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, ed., Strobe Talbott, (Boston 1970), p.517.

decisiveness of nuclear weapons in a future war. Its main implication was that any attempts by the US at limited armed conflicts would not succeed, and that all wars between the capitalist and socialist camps would quickly escalate to an all out war.³⁹ There are some experts who feel that the "single option" strategy of the Soviet Union was only one such strategy. They contend that the Soviets never categorically denied the possibility of limited wars ever taking place. According to Leon Goure one Soviet military analyst conceded that "limited wars have occurred in the past; they may also occur in the future."⁴⁰ The evidence of this proposition is too fragmentary to be able to say with certainty that the Soviets really believed in the concept of a limited exchange. Their public pronouncements have always been to the contrary. There are many like William Scott, who believe that the basic thrust of the Soviet Military doctrine throughout the 1960s has always been centred around the notion of the primacy of nuclear weapons. He feels that since the declaration of a doctrine usually precedes actual deployment by 10 years, the large Soviet nuclear forces of today are actually the result of decisions made at the beginning of the 1960s.⁴¹

39 R. Bonds, n.29., p.208.

40 Leon Goure, Soviet Limited War Doctrine, Santa Monica, Calif, RAND P-2744, May 1963, p.3.

41 W.P.Scott, "Soviet Military Doctrine and Strategy: Realities and Misunderstandings", Strategic Review, Vol.3, No.3, Summer 1975, p.60-62.

With the ouster of Khrushchev in 1964, however, there were some modifications in doctrine, although the nuclear emphasis remained unaltered. The Soviet doctrine began moving away from the assertion that war between the capitalist and socialist States must inevitably escalate to general nuclear war. To Lockwood, this has been evidenced by the fact that Soviet journals and important personalities made a reference to it. According to the Soviet journal *Voennaia Mysl'*, "Consequently, according to the means of conducting war fare, consideration is given both to nuclear and non-nuclear, and according to its scales-world and local." Marshal Grechko, in a speech to the All-Army Conference of Young Officer's in November 1969 said, "Much attention is being devoted to the reasonable combination of nuclear rocket weapons with perfected conventional classic armaments, to the capability of units and subunits to conduct combat actions under nuclear as well as non-nuclear conditions. Such an approach ensures the high combat capabilities of the troops and their constant readiness for action under conditions of variously shapped circumstances.⁴² It is clear from this collection of views that the Soviets over the decade of the sixties developed the doctrine that would take into account at two ends of the spectrum: the general nuclear war and conventional war. The important aspect of this thesis was that the Soviets never explicitly talked about any kind of limited nuclear exchange that would result from an

42 Lockwood, n.37., p.33

escalated conventional war. They thought of war as confined to certain areas which could be conventional. But they refused to play along with the Western rules of the game of escalation and that too on Western terms. They have always publicly pronounced that any escalation from a conventional war would only to a general nuclear war.

A theme that has remained constant throughout the 1960s has been the role of surprise and Soviet pre-emptive strategy. The Soviets have always declared that the best way to achieve survival and win a nuclear exchange is to preempt the enemy forces once they are convinced that the enemy is going to attack the Soviet Union. It should be noted that the Soviet capabilities in the 1960s for launch-on-warning capabilities was not adequate. The best example of the strategy of preemption is found in Sokolovskiy's Military Strategy: "possibilities exist in averting a surprise attack are constantly growing. Present means of reconnaissance, detection, and surveillance can opportunely disclose a significant portion of the measures of direct preparation of a nuclear attack by the enemy and in the very first minutes locate the mass launch of missiles and the take off of aircraft belonging to the aggressor and at the right time, warn the political leadership of the country about the impending danger. Thus, possibilities exist not to allow a surprise attack by an aggressor, to deliver nuclear strikes on him, at the right time.⁴³

43 Sokolovskiy, n.2., p.280.

There has been divided opinion about the real intentions of the Soviet war fighting capability and intentions. Ranged on one side are those who believe that the Soviets do have a war fighting strategy and on the other are those who are willing to believe the Soviet contention that thermonuclear war is dangerous for the survival of man. The hardliners notably Colin S. Gray and Keith Payne draw attention to an article by Lieutenant Colonel E. Rybkin in the September issue of *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*. In this article Rybkin eschewed the position that the non-utility of nuclear war as an instrument of State policy on the ground that "an a priori rejection of the possibility of victory is harmful because it leads to moral disarmament to a disbelief in victory, and to fatalism and passivity." Gray and Payne claim that Rybkin writing in the *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, (a military theory journal published by the Main Political Administration), was in fact with the approval of the CPSU Central Committee. With this they contended that the Soviet strategic thinking on general nuclear war was different from the US view that believed in the mutual assured destruction model.

On the other side were analysts like Roman Kolkowicz and William Zimmerman who thought that this article was an aberration on the side of military, rather than evidence of a consensus within the Soviet military. They, instead quote

Major General Talensky who in the May 1965 issue of International Affairs wrote:

there is no more dangerous illusion that the idea that thermonuclear war can still serve as an instrument to politics."(44)

To counter this argument the hawks contended that for Rybkin to have said otherwise would have been going in opposition to the ideological assertions of many Soviet analysts that a future nuclear war would result in the final destruction of capitalism, thus implying the survival of the Soviet Union and the triumph of Socialism. Thus according to Rybkin, the Soviet nuclear war fighting doctrine implied that:

- 1 A nuclear war is possible.
- 2 If nuclear war is possible, it should be fought to achieve victory.
- 3 Correct capabilities and strategies make it possible to attain victory.
- 4 Adherence to mutual assured destruction deprives the Soviet strategic forces of their political and military utility and gives the US a free hand in the conduct of limited wars.

However, the Soviet public statements have revealed that they do not believe in the utility of nuclear war as an instrument of politics. Secondly, the hawks tend to forget that such a proposition has only been made in journals. No

44 N.Talensky, "The Late War: Some Reflections", International Affairs, No.5, May 1965, p.15.

important Soviet leader has made any such assertion. Thirdly, while allowing for debate on strategic issues in the US, these "superhawks" do not believe that it could exist in the Soviet Union.

The development of the Soviet strategic doctrine during the 1960s thus contained elements of continuity from the 1950s, mainly the continuing emphasis on the importance of surprise and a preemptive strategy with the objective of victory in the event of general nuclear war. The decade of the 1960s was further characterized by a shift in emphasis following the ouster of Khrushchev from a single option strategy relying on a "minimum deterrence" posture to a doctrine that recognized the need for greater flexibility in military capability across the spectrum of conflict, and, therefore, called for a greater buildup in conventional as well as nuclear capability. The decade was especially marked by the rapid growth of Soviet strategic forces to the point that by the end of the decade they matched the US forces in rough parity. The Soviets in the ensuing decades would perceive this development as decisive in terms of its effects on the evolution of US strategic doctrine.⁴⁵

Through the 1970s and 1980s the Soviet doctrine has been one of nuclear war avoidance, ~~warfighting~~ war survival.

45 Jonathan, Lockwood, n.37, p.36.

Belief in deterrence is implicit in the Soviet strategic doctrine but more importantly it is not treated as separate from a warfighting/war survival doctrine. The assumption underlying this doctrine is that better prepared the Soviet armed forces are to fight and win a nuclear war, the more effective they will be as a deterrent to an attack on the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ Another aspect of the Soviet strategy is the concept of civilian defense. There have been two views as regards this programme. On the one hand, it is argued that civilian defense is more of a propaganda exercise to assure the population of the country that the Government is taking adequate steps to see that at least part of the population could survive in a nuclear holocaust. It has more moral boosting and propaganda purposes. On the other hand are those who believe that the civil defense programme could be considered more as a part of the strategy. Hence the underpinnings of Soviet strategy are not the strategic triad as in the United States but the strategic quadrad. They see civil defense as an implicit part of the Soviet nuclear warfighting strategy which has too, the notion of survival. They feel the Soviets reason that an increased Soviet war survival capability increases the credibility of Soviet deterrence by undermining the fundamental tenet of US strategic doctrine: that of being able to threaten the Soviet Union with assured destruction.⁴⁷

46 L.Goure, F.Kohler and M.Harvey, The Role of Nuclear Forces in Current Soviet Strategy, Coral Gables, Fla., 1975, p.47.

47 Ibid., p.6.

Another aspect of the Soviet doctrine that has shown continuous acceptability since 1955, is the role of pre-emptive strike as the best means of maximizing the chances of survival in a nuclear war and thus attaining victory.

Thus we find that despite the power changes that have taken place within the Kremlin, there has been a remarkable consistency in the Soviet strategic doctrine even after the death of Stalin. Some modifications were introduced primarily as a result of technological changes in the arms race, but its effects on official doctrine have not been too widespread. The Soviets still believe in deterrence and have publicly stressed the fact that in the nuclear age there cannot be any victors or vanquished.

CHAPTER - III

POLITICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL EFFECTS ON SUPER POWER : NUCLEAR DOCTRINES.

Adversarial relations between the two super powers has been evident since the end of World War II. Both the powers have tried to use agreements to their own advantage by interpreting them differently and have used crisis and international problems to justify their own military build-ups. While looking into these problems which faced both super powers and how they have responded to them, we would have to divide the post World War II period into four distinct phases, 1949-1972, 1972-1977, 1977-1980, onwards. These phases should be looked at differently because each contained certain incidents that have coloured the over all nuclear balance and have moved the epicentre of the deterrence theory from Massive Retaliation to assured destruction to war fighting/war survival.

The first phases 1949-1972.

This phase could well be marked as a period of dominant US superiority, though the Soviets continued their relentless march towards "rough parity" with the US. The evolution of the US nuclear doctrine in the early years of the nuclear age was guided by the internal disputes that were taking place

in the US armed forces. All the wings favoured the strategy that suited and benefitted their own wing most. The Soviet threat was used to justify this trend. An example of this would be the Air Force, which clamoured for a counter force capability using the Berlin crisis of 1948 to show aggressive intentions. The army favoured more conventional defense spending to "deter" the Soviet threat.¹

Even after the detonation of the Soviet nuclear and thermonuclear bomb, the American perceptions did not seem to be overly affected by these events. The reason was that the US held complete and overwhelming superiority in terms of payload and delivery vehicles. The Soviet conventional threat in Europe was sought to be deterred through this preponderance of power. By 1955 however, the picture began to change. The continued build up in Soviet forces, the costly war in Korea and the escalation of conflict in Vietnam made the US perceive Soviet behaviour with significant consequences. In the US, the first signs of "incredibility of deterrence" were noticed. According to Betts, this was inevitable because democracy requires public awareness of danger to allocate more resources to defense programmes.² Another tendency that proved counter productive

1 Richard Betts, "Nuclear Weapons", p.108.

2 Ibid., p.109.

to the Soviets and helped to spurt the US military posture was the official Soviet declarations that exaggerated their strength rather than their vulnerability. In 1955, the Soviets deceived US observers of an air parade by having Bison bombers fly over, out of sight and back again, creating an illusion that they had far more Bisons than they actually did. This supported the revised US intelligence estimates that provoked the "bomber gap" scare.³

Another example was the "missile gap" bluff that Nikita Khrushchev tried to pull off, that gave the Kennedy Administration the fuel to launch an unprecedented build up of US nuclear forces. The political rhetoric helped fuel threatening perceptions of each other. For the Soviet Union, in period of clear nuclear inferiority, the advances made by the Americans had to be countered through the projection of bloated Soviet strength. For Khrushchev it was essential as he had yet to consolidate his power. The Americans seized this opportunity and justified not only the doctrinal adjustments that were made in the strategic policies but also the spurt in weapons building programme. Throughout the sixties, Vietnam was used as an event to gain more allocations for the military. However, during the Brezhnev era, the Soviets also launched into a massive build up of strategic forces. The humiliation of the Cuban missile crisis had to be averted forever. By 1972, both sides had run their course of militarisation. Both

3 Ibid., p.110.

had domestic problems which required them to come together to deflect growing criticism of the existing policies. Thus a period of hostility that lasted from 1949 ended in 1972 with detente.

1972-1977:

This period saw the high point of detente with several bilateral and multilateral agreements being signed between the major actors. SALT-I, a statement on "Basic Principles of Relations" and the Four Power Protocol on Berlin were among the notable events that started this phase. Trade between the US and USSR jumped to over \$3 billion. Major Conferences on Security and Cooperation in Europe and Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions in Europe were announced. The fair was rich with the promise of detente."⁴

A decade later, relations had reached a record low, and the American President was denouncing Soviet "tyranny, repression, aggression, atrocities and the most massive Soviet build up of military power in history."⁵ The US itself has embarked on its largest military build up. There was tension in Europe over the Polish crisis, the gas pipeline sanctions issue and the peace movement that was challenging the Alliance decision to deploy Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe. The CSCE and MBFR meetings had virtually come to a halt and Reagan viewed SALT-II" as

4 Samuel Huntington, "Renewed Hostility", in p.265.

5 The Washington Post, June 18, 1982, p.1.

fatally flawed". But he decided to observe the limits of BALT-II on an informal basis. Suddenly confrontation was the order of the day.

There were differing perceptions on how to view this entire period. Some viewed that the ultimate reality in relations between the super powers is necessarily competitive and the accords and euphoria of post 1972 were superficial, unreal and largely a product of American misperception of the fundamental nature of the relationship.⁶ Others viewed it some what differently. They argue that despite all the rhetoric and gestures of 1983, the underlying realities were not different from what they had been ten years earlier. Both had agreed to observe the unratified SALT-II limits, new negotiations were launched on intermediate and strategic weapons. Technology was embargoed but grain was traded, the Soviets had not invaded Poland and US marines were not sent to Central America. These two arguments became the principal focal points of the Republican and Democratic parties respectively.⁷

To Samuel Huntington, US-USSR relations should be viewed in "terms of regular oscillations or cycles in policy and relationships. The res pursuit of one set of policy goals

6 S. Huntington, n.4., p.266.

7 Ibid., p.266.

through one set of means generates results, reactions and frictions that then lead to the development of different policy goals and means: the pursuit of these then produces a return toward ones similar to those of the first phase."⁸

The major reasons for the receding of the relations between the US-USSR were : 1. The continuing across the board Soviet military buildup during the 1960s and 1970s coinciding for seven years with a real decline in US military spending. 2. The extension of Soviet-Cuban military influence in the Third World, most notably in Angola and Horn of Africa, 3. A growing conservative domestic political trend that was the single most significant feature of American politics during the 1970s and that was fueled with respect to foreign policy by reaction to the US defeat in Vietnam.⁹

These currents interacted with and reinforced each other to wash away the foundations of detente. In all probability none of the above currents by themselves could have generated the hostility wave. The Soviet military build-up went on for over a decade after Cuba without being noticed in the US threat perceptions. What caused these winds of hostility in the first place? The growth of the conservative trend in America was a result of the contradictions that arose in the development of the American welfare State of the 1960s, there was the slow disintegration of the New Deal political coalition, there was persistent inflation fuelled in part by Vietnam, the oil shocks of 1973, the

8 Ibid., p.267, also see Samuel Huntington, American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony, (Cambridge Mass 1981)

9 S.Huntington, n.4., p.268

revival of religious fundamentalism in the US like Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, all had a natural reaction that led to the hardening of the US stance on Soviet intentions.

On the other hand, the Soviet build up represented a rationalization and generalization of earlier Soviet efforts. There was a feeling that the time had come for the Soviet Union to be an equal partner in global status and Soviet efforts in Angola, Horn of Africa and Mozambique represented this effort. All these seemingly loose causes coalesced to generate the hostility wave.

The core of detente was the perceived mutual interests in trade and arms control. The Soviets wanted an access to Western technology, while the US business men were looking to the large untapped market. The US was trying to rope the Soviets into the "international system" by increasing trade. Which would not only enhance the Soviet stake in stability but also give the US leverage to activate the opening up of the Soviet Union to gradual reform.¹⁰ Both sides felt that they would gain from arms control as it would regularize and limit competition. Also the Soviets saw in SALT a formal recognition by the US as a truly global power. This was in some measure due to the relatively stable "assymetrical balance" between the two super powers. It seemed to provide a secure underpinning for arms limitation agreements. The weakness

10 Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheavel, (Boston 1982), p.235.

of detente in what it meant to each super power. For the Americans it meant the continuation of the existing military balance, while the Soviets deemed to assume that it meant the continuation of the prevailing trends in that balance. While the Americans assumed that the Soviets would not use detente to exacerbate conflicts in international trouble spots, the Soviets assumed that detente was incompatible with Western "interference" in internal affairs such as treatment of dissidents in the Soviet Union or linkage of trade with Jewish emigration.

The October War of 1975 between Israel and Egypt was the first major event to highlight the weakness of detente. Though attempts were made by both sides to maintain momentum in trade and arms control, the antagonisms and confrontations of other areas started to impinge on detente. The Soviets were becoming increasingly concerned with the US attempts to push forward human rights and Jewish emigration, the Americans on the other hand, sensed Soviet complicity in Egypt starting the October War. The Soviet threat to introduce troops into the Middle East was taken by hawks in America as sign of US weakness and growth of Soviet power, with the Angolan exercise, two years later refuelling these concerns.

American policy in this period saw two contradictory strains. While on the one hand, they tried to keep up the image of detente through negotiations on arms control and by promoting trade, they reacted indifferently to the changing

military balance. The Vietnam debacle made the US adamantly oppose Soviet projection of power in Third World States, and wanted to use local military action to stop this tide. While the US Administration was willing to take action to stop Soviet influence in Vietnam and Angola, the US public opinion showed that generally Americans were unwilling to use American troops to defend other countries. Even Congress was affected by this mood and opposed anything that smacked of interventionism through the use of American troops. Thus, in action in Indo-China in 1973 and the cut off in financial and military aid to Angolan rebels in 1975 were the result of such a fortress America mood.

While the Congress cut off aid to stop Soviet advancement in Third World areas, it also hampered the progress of detente when it linked Jewish emigration to trade with the Soviets. By 1976 the public opinion was still against the strengthening of military forces. The Administration realizing the end of detente became more concerned with the "unfavourable trends in military - particularly the strategic-balance". This led to a re-evaluation of the Soviet programmes. The Soviet budgetary increases strengthening of its conventional forces, and the acquisition of a blue water navy by them were viewed as major sources of tension. On the strategic level, the deployment of new generation of ICBM's and the Soviet

MIRVing capability raised the spectre that the Soviets were moving ahead of the US.

All this led to a reappraisal of the Soviet military effort. To justify their own viewpoints, many US academics talked of the earlier estimates as being understated. In 1974 Albert Wohlstetter, felt that US intelligence had failed to predict the rate and size of Soviet ICBM build up of the 1960.¹¹ In 1975-76, the CIA upped its estimates of Soviet spending on defence from 6-8% to 10-15% and it also said that the USSR spending exceeded US military spending by 20 to 40%.¹² Accusations were made that the Soviets were violating the SALT accords. A systematic effort was being made by the opponents of detente to halt the seven year decline in real defense spending in the US. The US Administration was divided over this issue. While Kissinger wanted to stick to detente and some arms control agreement, the Defense Secretary James Schlesinger wanted to use the Soviet threat to strengthen US military posture.¹³

Though public opinion in the US was still in favour of detente, the traditional liberal public philosophy was losing

11 A. Wohlstetter, "Is There a Strategic Arms Race?" Foreign Policy, No.15, Summer 1974, p.3.

12 New York Times, October 23, 1975, p.29.

13 S. Huntington, n.4, pp.273-274.

its intellectual fervour. Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programmes were facing reaction. The final US defeat in Vietnam in 1975 cleared the way for a resurgence in conservative nationalistic reaction in foreign affairs. The Strategic Survey reported that a "general detente fatigue" was prevailing the West. The foreign policy of Kissinger now came under increasing fire, which made the US Administration accept rhetoric in foreign affairs that virtually disassociated with the detente process.

1977-1979

The coming of the Carter Administration signalled two powerful currents that took the wind out of the sails of detente. Firstly, on the ideological side, Carter being outside the mainstream liberal Democratic party, was increasingly pressured by the more moderate elements of the Democratic party were denied Government posts. Hence he came under attack from the left, while the right made up of conservative Republicans had formed themselves into the "Committee on Present Danger" (CPD). This group consisting of Paul Nitze, Max Kampelman and Eugene Rostow ^A started a vigorous campaign for an enhanced US military effort and a SALT-II treaty more favourable to the US. There was also fire from the neo-conservatives who were associated with journals like the Public Interest, Commentary and New Republic. While

the CPD focussed primarily on the Soviet build up, the neo-conservatives attacked the Soviet repression and expansion with particular emphasis on the Middle East.

The Administration's political vulnerability was reinforced by its failure to counter the Soviet-Cuban military expansionism in the Horn of Africa, the highly publicized decisions on weapons like the B-1 bomber and the neutron bom. Another set of incidents that has an even more serious set of repercussions in creating an impression of weakness and irresolution in US policy were the four States that "were lost" due to internal developments. The 1978 Afghanistan coup that brought in a Socialist government headed by Noor Mohammad Taraki, the June 1978 coup in South Yemen that brought it closer to the Soviet bloc, the toppling of the Shah of Iran in February 1979 and the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua in July 1979. All these were perceived as American 'defeats' though it was clear that they were the result of internal contradictions in their societies that had no known Soviet involvement. Thus the intellectual initiative was seized by the conservative opinion makers and this interacting with the seeming ambivalence and wishy washiness of the US Administration produced major changes in US public opinion. By June 1978, a majority of people in the US wanted a stronger line against the Soviets and increased military spending. By 1979 the post-Vietnam syndrome had faded out giving way to

the feeling that the US lagged behind the Soviet Union in military strength and overall influence in world affairs.

Thus the first three years of the Carter Administration were plagued by a continuous Soviet military build up, Soviet-Cuban military intervention in the Horn of Africa, the 'loss' of four countries to governments less friendly to the US, an escalating attack on detente from the influential public opinion makers and finally a public opinion that was becoming increasingly anti-Soviet and pro-defense.¹⁴ His administration was beset with differences on the nature of the policy choices to counter these threats. While Brezezinski favoured a stronger line against the Soviets, Vance wanted to be more accomodating in the approach to the Soviets. Presidential Directive 18 of 1977 showed the deep divisions within the Administration. It was the dilemma between competition and cooperation that ultimately brought grief to Carter's foreign policy, which began a downward slide towards an arms build up. Yet, Carter it would seem, had understood this dilemma. In a speech to the Georgia Institute of Technology, he said that US-USSR relations are "a mixture of cooperation and competition". The US must not "let the pressures of inevitable competition overwhelm possibilities for cooperation, nor let cooperation blind us to the realities of competition". As President, he "had no more difficult and delicate task than

14 Ibid., p.278.

to balance the two".¹⁵ Thus despite the two opposing pressures, Carter, did not become fully committed to one side or the other. Nor did he formulate a policy that would be implemented without changing it in mid-course. This inconsistency whether it was with respect to the B-1, MX or the NATO two track policy, led to the belief that Carter was indecisive and not strong enough to take on the Soviet challenge. It gave additional fuel to the opinion makers who were advocating an unidirectional foreign policy of arms build up vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

With sagging ratings in the public opinion polls, Carter towards the end of the third year, realised that tough anti-Soviet talk meant good politics. With the trend sweeping America, such a move would be welcomed by the public and there would be greater support for development of new weapons. Fiscal year 1979 saw US defense spending increase in real terms by 3.9%. The development of the B-1 bomber was cancelled, the MX and Cruise were approved, the Persian Gulf came in for greater scrutiny and the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) was envisaged. In this period the Congress was favourably disposed towards the Carter plans.

15 Jimmy Carter, Address, Georgia Institute of Technology, (Atlanta Georgia) February 20, 1979, quoted in S. Huntington, n.4, p.280.

While the Congress and the public were favourably disposed towards American show of strength, the Carter Administration did not prevent the spread of Soviet influence in Third World countries militarily. They stood on the periphery watching the unfolding of events in the Horn of Africa and did not respond militarily to the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. This too, led to intensified criticism of the Carter Administration.

1979 Onwards

1979 marks an important landmark in the history of super power relations. The failure of Carter to define a successful policy of containing Soviet influence in the Third World led to criticism from hard line opponents. The Iranian hostage crisis and the failure of the Americans to do anything about it, the Soviet brigade controversy in Cuba and finally the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to the disappearance of Carter's two track policy i.e. of competition and cooperation with the Soviet Union. SALT-II though signed in the middle of the year was in trouble in the Congress. Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia summed up the state of relations succinctly, "We have come to the end of an era."¹⁶

16 Sam Nunn, quoted in Huntington, n.4, p.283.

It marked a beginning in relations between the super powers that brought rhetorical exchanges to new heights and advocated a philosophy that called for greater military spending, aggressive diplomacy and aid and cooperation with allies on the basis of ideology. There was remarkable continuity between the Carter Administration of 1980 and the incoming Reagan Administration. Military budgets went by a whopping 4-5% over earlier sanctions that were around 3% spending in real terms after taking into account inflation. On arms control the Administration backed away from talks and started negotiating only when they felt that they had sufficient military powers. The economic linkage of Kissinger gave way to economic warfare with the Soviets under Reagan. It was to be used as a weapon to weaken the Soviet strength than change the Soviet behaviour. With respect to aid for insurgency the Reagan Administration moved away from the Carter Administration policy of benign neglect and started funding Afghan and Nicaraguan rebels to "bleed the Soviets". Grenada, though a publicity campaign was an attempt at portraying American power in distant areas. Hostage to the whims of small time dictators, was not to be met by restraint any more. The Libyan action in April 1986 was to prove this policy.

With Reagan, the neo-conservative winds are blowing strong. The political environment will dictate how much belligerence would be practised by the Reagan Administration. Competition would remain the key word in super power relations.

Military balance would not be dictated by parity or essential equivalence but by technological nuclear superiority. The Soviets would react to this with continuing build up of its military strength. They would also use the propaganda machine to reduce the winds of hostility by offering deals to the Americans that are more than equal in bargain. This would be to break the neo-conservative ploy of showing the Soviets as a belligerent and an evil empire. Except in Afghanistan, they would remain on the periphery waiting rather than risking political confrontation with the Americans.

Political Perceptions in Super Power Relations

In the United States, the role of the academic community in trying to analyse and conclude the nature of the Soviet threat has important political significance. The academic community by virtue of its free association with Government has been accorded a voice in the highest councils of Government. All politicians in their quest for political office try to eke out a specific position on super power relations. This is usually done with the help of academics and their view points. All American Administrations have made utmost use of this mutual exchange of views between academics and politicians to define a policy towards the Soviet Union. This policy has strategic implications, which result in either newer theories of warfare coming up as part of the

official doctrine or the continuation of old models of doctrinal propositions being supported.

The doctrine of limited nuclear war is very much embedded in the political view points that the Administration have held. It is not the only guiding outline on policy formulations for a limited war strategy, other inputs like the technological progress public opinion (which we have just discussed) and international factors also play an important part. Thus we find that the nature and type of threat the Soviet Union is represented with, has a lot to do with the Administration. While the Republicans have a specific view of the Soviet threat, the Democrats too, share specific, albeit differing thoughts.

The present view of the nature of Soviet threat held by the Reagan Administration believes that the Mutual Assured Vulnerability model was formulated without consideration of the differences in US and Soviet strategic thought. Also the basic motives of the Soviets for seeking influence and securing their borders were different from the existing accepted versions of a decade ago. It believes that the Soviet expansion after World War II of its frontiers was more a realization of the cherished goals of the Czars. They have a deep set and historically well founded concern about foreign military invasions. As Malcolm Toon, former US Ambassador to the USSR said, "centuries of invasions from

both East and West have left their mark on the out look of the Russian people and its rulers".¹⁷ They feel that this "seige mentality" is further intensified by the strong emphasis on Marxist-Leninist ideology, on the inevitable hostility of the capitalist powers toward the Socialist States and by the Soviets own repeated warnings about the dangers of capitalist encirclement.¹⁸ Thus Soviet perceptions are an amalgam of traditional Russian and Marxist-Leninist elements. They both have tendencies towards an expansionist foreign policy. This according to them answers the question as to why the Soviets moved into East Europe and recently into Afghanistan. Near obsession with defense has provided a powerful impetus for the accumulation of military power and for the steady expansion of Soviet political and military control beyond the nations political frontiers. They were motivated by what some observers have called a quest for "absolute security". The Soviets for over 60 years accorded the highest investment priority to defense. In addition they have sought to establish and enlarge a territorial buffer between themselves and their prospective enemies. They view Soviet military power having another function - that of promoting their State interests.¹⁹

17 M.Toon, in US Congress, quoted in Daniel Kaufman et al. eds., US National Security - A Framework for Analysis, (Lexington, Mass: 1985), p.40.

18 Ibid., p.40.

19 Ibid., p.45.

These proponents have criticized the "convergence theory" which was to have increased contacts with the Soviet Union to draw them more closely into the "world community via the establishments of an increasingly complex" web of entanglements" with the West. It was argued that the convergence theory would lead to the Soviet Union moderating its foreign policy. They reject this view point because the Soviet Union emerging as a status quo power would go against the grain of Marxist-Leninist ideology that see the world in two hostile camps.²⁰ They argue that the Soviet Union despite the nuclear age, is committed to a foreign policy that is inimical to Western democracies. The Soviet support for national liberation wars is viewed by these experts as proof of the willingness of the Soviet Union to intervene politically and militarily in the affairs of other countries and feel justified in doing so.²¹

In their view, the Soviet emphasis on change in the military balance is the reason for the acceptance by US foreign policy of peaceful coexistence. They interpret peaceful coexistence as the imposition of unilateral restraint imposed on American foreign policy and the use of military

20 Keith Payne, Nuclear Deterrence in US-USSR Relations (Boulder Col, 1982), & p.82.

21 Ibid., p.87.

force -- thus freeing Soviet foreign policy from Western opposition. Thus the Soviet foreign policy is supported by military power to play a specific role in inhibiting Western opposition. "The nuclear and missile potential of the Soviet Union and of the entire Socialist community cancels out imperialism's opportunity to use its war machine to obtain any political advantages, thus explaining the apparent paradox that imperialism's military arsenal grows up by the year, while the power factor of its foreign policy is increasingly depreciated. In fact the imperialist powers have not succeeded in employing the threat or use of arms to achieve any of their aims, whether in Vietnam, in Cuba or Angola or in scores of flashpoints over the last few decades."²²

A deeper investigation of the tenets of the Soviet foreign policy according to its critics would reveal that it does not reflect a State which is committed to maintaining stability or status quo. They point out to Soviet extensions into the Horn of Africa Angola and Afghanistan as "an attempt to create conditions favourable to the evolution of the class struggle".²³ With its awesome build up in military strength, the Soviet Union is willing to defend not only "the Socialist Motherland and commonwealth... but also progressive forces

22 V.Kortunov, "Socialism and International Relations", in International Affairs, (Moscow), No.10, October 1979, p.45.

23 Payne, n.20, p.110.

far removed from traditional areas of Soviet concern." Thus they feel that the US counter measures in terms of embargoes and restraints on trade and cultural contacts will have little validity in constraining extended Soviet political and military activities.²⁴

Another significant aspect that the proponents of the far right point out is the concept of political effect of the strategic balance. It is the accepted Soviet notion that it was due to their strategic build up starting from the 1960s that altered the correlation of forces and forced the US to re-evaluate its foreign policy and tone down its aggressive designs. While the US has always attempted to delink from the Clausewitzian phraso, that war is the continuation of politics by other means, the Soviets see a relationship between the character of the strategic balance and regional political contexts. Thus the change in the correlation of forces has forced the US to step down from its position of strength and follow a more circumspect foreign policy. All this, according to Payne, shows that the Soviet views, declaratory postures and their actions are in direct contrast to the assured vulnerability reasoning on which the US deterrence policy is based.²⁵

24 Barry Blechman, Stephen Kaplan, "US Military Force as a Political Instrument", Political Science Quarterly, 94, No.2, Summer 1979, pp.193-209.

25 Payne, n.20, p.111.

The character of the Soviet foreign policy forces the US to prepare for an active competition over the politico-economic orientation of vital national interest in distant regions. The US must be successful in contesting the Soviet efforts to change the international order to the detriment of the West.

The eastern liberal establishment has always consistently contested this "militarized" version of US-Soviet relations, and the inherently ruthless image that is attributed to the Soviet leadership. They criticize the image that the Soviet leadership has in American public image. This image is that: (1) the source of tensions flows automatically from the nature of the Soviet regime that confronts the US; (2) the leadership is a group of men already dominating and misruling a large part of the world and motivated only by a relentless determination to bring still more peoples under their domination; and (3) only by the spectre of a superior military force that includes the ability to use nuclear weapons, could these men be "deterred" from committing all sorts of acts of aggression or intimidation with a view to subjugating other peoples and eventually conquering the world.²⁶

26 George Kennan, "The State of US-Soviet Relations : Breaking the Spell", in Gwyn Prins, ed., The Choice: Nuclear Weapons Versus Security (London, 1982), pp. 128-129.

The Soviet regime, according to these experts like Kennan, Bundy, McNamara, Carroll, etc., has always been marked by a whole series of characteristics that complicated relations with the West. Many were inherited and many were the product of the misconceived intentions attributed to Stalin. They claim that the regime is marked by high sense of insecurity. This has a tendency to overdo its cultivation of military strength. Due to its historical memory it is unduly sensitive to slightest influence or involvement of outside powers in regions just beyond its lengthy borders. And it has a passion for secrecy that is interpreted in the West as trying to hide things for destabilizing the West.

As for the influence-seeking in the Third World, these experts admit that the Soviets are engaged in the search for influence and authority in the Third World. But their methods are not different from those employed by all major powers including the US. They point out that this search for influence has not met with constant success and they have faced with failures in Egypt, Somalia and the Middle East. Then there is the phenomenon of the "dual personality that the Soviet regime presents to the resident foreigner: the facade that is composed of people - often amiable and charming people - authorized to associate and communicate with the outside world; and, behind that personality, of whose inscrutable attitudes and intentions the foreigner is never quite sure, and which for that reason probably incurs more suspicion than it deserves."²⁷

The Soviet leaders have sought to exploit their growing military power for foreign policy purposes. Peaceful coexistence has remained central to Soviet thinking. Khrushchev in 1956 declared that war between capitalism and Socialism was no "longer fatalistically inevitable". War also was less probable because the Soviet Union was in a position to prevent an attack on itself or its allies from the West.^{27a} These considerations have been the main impetus in Soviet thinking on the reasons for detente. According to David Holloway, the Soviet Union does not have all the answers for the questions posed by nuclear weapons and nuclear war. This view contrasts with the conservative idea that the Soviets have a pre-determined objective and nuclear weapons have been carefully calibrated into the calculations for undermining Western stability. The Soviet leaders have "regarded nuclear weapons both as instruments of war and political pressure, and as the potential agents of catastrophic destruction. This duality is evident in the Soviet acceptance of the objective reality of the relationship of mutual assured destruction and in the simultaneous preparation for nuclear war."²⁸

While the conservatives have attributed an enormously large percentage of success in the Third World to exploitation

27a N.Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, trans. and ed. S.Talbot, (Boston, 1970), p.251.

28 David Holloway, "Soviet Policy and the Arms Race", in Gwyn Prins eds., The Choice: Nuclear Weapons Versus Security (London), p.125.

of military power for political purposes, the eastern liberal establishment contends that it has met with only partial success. They cite the examples of the failure of Khrushchev's missile diplomacy as it provoked the US to embark on a massive build up of strategic forces. Under Brezhnev, the continued growth of Soviet power undermined detente and contributed to its collapse and the Soviet foreign policy has not met with any extraordinary success in the Third World as is countenanced by its rightist critics. The changes in Government that took place in the four countries viz. Afghanistan, Yemen, Nicaragua and Ethiopia were largely due to internal contradictions of the earlier regimes rather than overt Soviet support.²⁹

As far as the leadership of the Soviet Union is concerned, liberals like Kennan argue that "leadership however complicated its relations with the West may be, does not want a major war - that it has a serious interest in avoiding such a war, and will, given a chance, go quite far together with us to avoid it. The term interest does not mean, in this case, an abstract devotion to the principle of peace as a moral ideal. It means a consciousness on the part of these men that certain of the things they most deeply care about would not be served by Russia's involvement in another great war. Anyone who tries to put himself in the position of the Soviet leaders will at once recognize the force of this point. Even if they

29 Ibid., p.127.

should be as evilly motivated as they are sometimes seen to be, these men are not free agents, wholly detached from the manifold complexities and contradictions that invariably go with the exercise of vast power. They constitute the government of a great country."³⁰

He goes on to further argue that the preservation of peace is not the only common sphere of interest between the US and USSR. They both are industrial powers and have a growing number of common problems. Among them are the environment, the consequences of nuclear war and many other problems of the industrial age which will require international collaboration. Just as the US is affected by the revolution in communications, education, organization of life, "human spirit and human fiber", the Soviet Union is no less affected by this revolution.

Thus we find that the two strands of thought in the US have largely supported the quest of successive administrations in formulating their policies. The complex interplay of factors that determine relations with the Soviet Union have their ideological roots in the view points put forward by experts. The division are clear in these two approaches. The conservative elements traditionally backed Republican governments, have been the hardliners who tended to view

30 G.Kennan, n.26, p.132.

the Soviet Union from the politico-military balance in the world. Any change in the status quo is seen by the US as Soviet aggression trying to upset the balance. The Democrats on the other hand, have tried to focuss on different interpretations leading to a far more broad based interaction with the Soviet Union. As Georgi Arbatov, writing in Foreign Affairs, said, that when the US was the dominant power in the world it was regarded as revolutionary, trying to ring the Soviet influence in their homeland itself. Now with the USSR catching up in military strength, the US is status quoist while the USSR is regarded as being revolutionary trying to upset the tranquil of international relations for its own benefit.³¹

Technological Imperatives

The drive towards greater accuracies, technical refinements, damage limitation and survivability of fixed installations have had perennial concern on the future of strategic balance. Such refinements have inevitably led to occurrence of counterforce strategies. Throughout the nuclear age both the US and USSR have consciously pursued a number of advanced technology programmes and associated support systems projects intended to provide alternative options to a purely assured

31 H.Trofimenko, "Soviet Union, America and the World", Foreign Affairs, Summer 1981, p.1434.

destruction strategy - technologies which permit counterforce targeting, damage limitation strategies and a greater nuclear warfighting capability. With the introduction of new technologies older doctrines have come under attack as not being credibly enough to counter such new weapons. The first such charge was with the launching of the Sputnik. It suddenly led to the belief that the nuclear superiority of the West was undermined and massive retaliation was not credible enough to deter a Soviet threat. The proponents of limited war felt that their case was strengthened. "The first effect of the Sputnik on American policy has been to emphasize the thermo-nuclear stalemate and to strengthen the case for supplementing or replacing massive retaliation by limited atom war - and for giving tactical atomic weapons to America's allies" wrote Dennis Healey then MP.³²

By 1957, the desire for US superiority was still strong. But there was a growing fear of Soviet superiority, in which case due to vulnerability, a balance of terror was preferable. There was concern over an offense-defense duel, fuelled by persistent technological innovations. This was viewed with gloom because the prospect of an unending arms race driven by the prospects of moments of terrifying weakness as well as moments of transitory superiority was worrying. Henry

32 Dennis Healey, quoted in L. Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London, 1982), p.155.

Kissinger articulating these fears wrote, "Technology is volatile. The advantage of surprise can be overwhelming. The forces-in-being are almost surely decisive-atleast in all out war. A major cause of instability is the very rate of technological change. Every country lives with the nightmare that even if it puts forth its best efforts its survival may be jeopardized by a technological breakthrough on the part of its opponent."³³ George Kennan also warned of the hazards of a technological race:

The technological realities of this competition are constantly changing from month to month and from year to year. Are we to flee like haunted creatures from one defensive device to another, each more costly and humiliating than the one before, cowering under ground one day, breaking up our cities the next, attempting to surround ourselves with elaborate shields on the third, concerned only to prolong the length of our lives while sacrificing all the values for which it might be worth while to live at all. (34)

Technology and stability are not synonymous. Technology would mean three things that were destabilizing to the arms race: first the ability to launch a sudden disarming, counterforce attack taking out more offensive weapons than were being used to execute the attack. Second, the ability to block an incoming missile attack with active defensive measures and third civil defense measures made strong enough

33 Henry Kissinger, "Arms Control, Inspection and Surprise Attack", Foreign Affairs, xxxviii, 3 April 1960, p.557.

34 George Kennan, Russia, the Atom and the West, (New York, 1958), p.54.

to absorb an attack.³⁵ The Gaither Report, presented to the National Security Council in 1957 depicted that an ABM defense would be the most unsettling possibilities of the arms race. Defensive characteristics like the "fortress concept", mobility of weapons, survivability of command, communication and control facilities were all destabilizing elements that would lead to greater emphasis on counter force and limited war strategies upsetting the international balance of terror as it existed.

According to Desmond Ball, it was the development of highly accurate ballistic missile re-entry systems, low yield nuclear weapons, of controlled response command and control systems that have led to the concept of fighting and surviving a limited nuclear war.³⁶ The Soviets have been testing interceptor satellites, killer satellites which are geared to destroying American lower altitude photographic reconnaissance and electronic intelligence satellites, while the US has responded with a number of programmes designed to improve the survivability of its satellite systems.³⁷ Development in guidance systems, in engines, warheads and accuracy on both sides have made the possibilities of a limited nuclear war more

35 L.Freedman, n.32, p.165.

36 Desmond Ball, "The Future of the Strategic Balance", Strategy and Defense :Australian Essays, (Sydney, 1982), p.79.

37 Ibid., p.80.

probable. All these technological developments are clearly moving in an identifiable direction - the enhancement of counterforce capabilities, damage limitation strategies, strategies of limited war fighting options and even first strike possibilities.

The integration of these enhanced capabilities for counterforce targeting and controlled nuclear exchanges into the national strategic policy have been most explicit in US doctrines. The National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 169, approved by Nixon in 1973, the Policy Guidance for Employment of Nuclear Weapons and Associated Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy (NUWEP) and further refinements spelled out in PD-59 are examples of the US adopting technological refinements and improvements to strategic doctrines. These developments in strategic doctrine were largely determined by the technological developments of the 1970s. The ability to target a wide range of military installations, including those hardened to withstand thousands of pounds per square inch of blast over pressure and the ability to conduct carefully delimited strikes was made possible by the development of accurate, multiple individually targeted warheads and real time surveillance, retargeting and communications capabilities. These technological developments not only created the strategic possibilities but in fact proved irresistible to the national security establishment. Despite the personal scepticism with which President Carter and Defense Secretary Brown viewed the possibility of limited and controlled counterforce

operations, neither was prepared to forgo the possibilities that technology offered and thus deny themselves the potential options and flexibility it offered.³⁸

The Soviets, too, despite professing that no concept of limited or controlled response is possible in a nuclear war have made moves towards integrating the new developments in their force structures. For example the silos of the SS-17, SS-18 and SS-19 have been hardened to the value of 6000 p.s.i.³⁹ The SS-16 and SS-24s are part of the attempt by the Soviets to give their land-based missiles more mobility and consequently more survivability. They have increased their C³I facilities and strengthened them.

Thus technological developments have led to the improvement in counterforce capabilities, damage limitation strategies and escalation control policies. We find that the doctrine of limited nuclear war has an intrinsic relationship with technological developments.

38 Desmond Ball, n.36, p.93.

39 Ibid., p.84.

Chapter - IV

THE DOCTRINE OF LIMITED NUCLEAR WAR - SUPER POWER PERCEPTIONS

There is a tendency to assume that the concept of "limited" war emerged only in the 1950s as a logical sequential development to the "massive retaliation" doctrine of John Foster Dulles. However, this is not so. It began about the time, when the United States had just begun acquiring atomic weapons as part of its response to a possible Soviet invasion of Western Europe. "The notion of developing tactical nuclear weapons developed quite early. The first theoretical studies in the area of 'limited nuclear war' began in 1948... at the California Institute of Technology"¹ There is, however, no doubt that the father of the contemporary theories of limited war was Colonel Basil Liddel Hart. His approach to limited war came as a result of his whole philosophy and from looking at the pragmatic exigencies of the times. He believed that with the advent of the nuclear age, there would be suffering and disruption of normal life to an unimaginable extent in case a war broke out between the atomic powers. Hence he felt that wars should be limited. To avoid the unpleasant incident of nuclear catastrophe, Liddel Hart felt:

it is not impossible that a reaction from
the disorders of the past thirty years might

1 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute,
"Tactical Nuclear Weapons : Euro plan Perspectives",
(London, 1978), p.10.

see a twentieth-century revival of reason sufficient to produce self control in war.(2)

Liddell Hart's critique of total war predated the atomic age, and, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings only confirmed his worst fears. He wrote,

when both sides possess atomic power, 'total warfare' makes nonsense. Total warfare implies that the aim, the effort, and the degree of violence are unlimited. Victory is pursued without regard to the consequences... Any unlimited war waged with atomic power would be worse than nonsense: it would be mutually suicidal.(3)

By the time Dulles had delivered his "massive retaliation" speech Hart was repeating his earlier stand only more eloquently,

would any responsible government, when it came to the point, dare use the H-bomb as an answer to local and limited aggression? To the extent that the H-bomb reduces the likelihood of full scale war, it increases the possibilities of limited war pursued by widespread local aggression... the value of strategic bombing forces has largely disappeared - except as the last resort.(4)

Meanwhile on the other side of the Atlantic, American theoreticians like Bernard Brodie soon began giving the rationale for the adoption of limited war strategies. Even within the

2 Quoted in Ian Clark, Limited Nuclear War (New Jersey, 1982), p.148.

3 Quoted in Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy (London, 1982), p.99.

4 B.H.Liddell Hart, Deterrent or Defence (London, 1960), p.23.

US bureaucratic politics, ideas about the use of nuclear weapons for tactical purposes were being spawned. Partly these new ideas were for the funding by the US Government for research of new weapons. The classic debate that emerged in Washington amongst the scientific community was between two schools - one represented by the Hungarian born scientist Edward Teller, who argued for the development of the "super" hydrogen bomb, and the other school lobbying for the development and manufacture of smaller tactical nuclear weapons, led by Robert Oppenheimer. The General Advisory Committee, whose Chairman was Oppenheimer, stated in its controversial report of 30 October 1949, (along with the recommendation against the crash development of the hydrogen bomb); "an intensification of efforts to make atomic weapons available for tactical purposes..."⁵ By the 1950s, Teller himself had changed his position and became an advocate of the limited use of tactical nuclear weapons, believing that they would do no more damage to "the face of the nation than conventional weapons".⁶ They also promoted the cause for "small" and "clean" nuclear arms for limited nuclear confrontations.

With the acquisition of atomic weapons by the Soviet Union, the prevailing view was that war now would lead to

5 H. York, The Advisors : Oppenheimer, Teller and the Super Bomb (San Francisco, 1976), p.152.

6 E.Teller and A.Brown, The Legacy of Hiroshima (London, 1962), p.281.

destruction for both sides. However, the concept of limited nuclear war had still its powerful proponents. William Kauffman in 1956, edited a collection of essays "Military Policy and National Security" which stressed the importance of credibility. He felt that if the United States was unable to respond to even minor threats with the policy of retaliation, because of the Soviets own ability to respond on a massive scale, then any threats it cared to make with regard to less than total provocations would not be taken seriously. "If the Communists should challenge our sincerity and they would have good reasons for daring to do so, we would either have to put up or shut up. If we put up, we would plunge into all the immeasurable horrors of atomic war. If we shut up, we would suffer a serious loss of prestige and damage our capacity to establish deterrents against further Communist expansion".⁷

Others like Bernard Brodie argued that the lessons of the Korean experience demolished "the basis for the glib axiom that all modern wars must be total, and demonstrated conspicuously some of the major constraints necessary to keep war limited".⁸ What these constraints were, Brodie has

7 William Kauffman, ed., Military Policy and National Security (Princeton, 1956), pp.21, 24-5.

8 Bernard Brodie, "More about Limited War", World Politics, Vol.X, October 1957, p.112.

not spelt out. Also, Brodie missed the point that unlike the present day scenarios of limited war being fought on the homelands of the super powers, the Korean experience was in a geographically limited area that did not directly impinge, on the homeland of the super powers. By 1957, the focus of debate shifted in favour of the limited war theorists in the United States. They began to concentrate on the credibility factor in the deterrence doctrine of the United States, the precise strategy that the West should adopt, and the form of warfare that would offer the greater possibility of keeping a war limited, in the sense of avoiding an all out nuclear exchange.⁹ Two theorists were able to popularize the cause of limited war. Henry Kissinger with his book, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy and Robert Osgood with Limited War : Challenge to American Strategy. Kissinger in his book, advocated the virtues of the limited nuclear war option vis-a-vis the "sole" reliance on Massive Retaliation. The basic premise of Kissinger's effort was that there has to be "a maximum number of stages between peace...and total war."¹⁰ By this, Kissinger was implying that weapons must have political utility and should allow for choices between two extremes. To put his idea in a capsule form, he wrote:

"We should leave no doubt that any aggression

9 Iran Clark, n.2., p.149-150.

10 Henry Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, (New York, 1957), p.136.

by the Communist bloc may be resisted with nuclear weapons, but we should make every effort to limit their effect and to spare the civilian population as much as possible. Without damage to our interest, we could announce that Soviet aggression would be resisted with nuclear weapons if necessary; that in resisting we would not use more than 500 kilotons explosive power unless the enemy used them first; that we would use clean* bombs with minimal fallout effects for any larger explosive equivalent unless the enemy violated the understanding; that we would not attack the enemy retaliatory force or enemy cities located more than a certain distance behind the battle zone or the initial line of demarcation; that within this zone we would not use nuclear weapons against cities declared open and so verified by inspection, the inspectors to remain in the battle zone even during the course of military options."(11)

Osgood, on the other hand, tried to establish the theoretical and historical justifications for the doctrine of limited nuclear war. He felt that its principal justification "lies in the fact that it maximises the opportunities for the effective use of military force as a rational instrument of policy."¹² He too, like Bernard Brodie felt that the Korean war had been fought on right principles, and was proof of the possibility of a limited contest between the two super powers, but thought that it was inadequately explained to the American public. Thus he concluded that there was a failure in American policy between the national policy and its military power. He felt that limited war options would be able to lend more credence to the strategy of

11 Ibid., p.231-232.

12 Robert Osgood, Limited War: Challenges to American Strategy, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p.18.

deterrence, and make more options open to American strategy formulators that would be proportionate to the nature of the threat it perceived. In this way there would be a far better correlation between the military power of the United States and its national policy, giving far more decisive results in favour of America. In essence what these two foremost advocates of the limited war, said was," the prerequisite for a policy of limited war is to reintroduce the political element into our concept of war fare and to discard the notion that policy ends when war begins or that war can have goals distinct from those of national policy."¹³

All the major theorists of the 1950s like Brodie, Kaufmann, Kissinger and Osgood believed that "the one basic proposition which must be established in the minds of men if progress is to be made towards resolving our terrible military dilemma is this: limited war must mean also limited objectives."¹⁴ To have limited objectives in a war which is limited in its scale of destruction must also per have a symmetry between the two belligerents in capabilities and intentions. But by the 1950s there was little doubt that if either super power tried to attack the other, the resulting clash would be anything but limited war. The proponents of the limited war to buttress their theory of symmetry in intentions and capabilities drew up an assumption that the

13 H.Kissinger, n.10., p.248.

14 Bernard Brodie, "Unlimited Weapons and Limited War", The Reporter, 1 November 1954, quoted in Lawrence Freedman, n.3., p.103.

Soviet Union would be behind any trouble-subversion, civil war or attempts at overthrowing legitimate Governments which had pro-Western orientations. It was assumed that by being in actual control of the individual conflicts they would be parties to settlements and negotiations. With these kinds of intentions "given" to the Soviets it also called for "their" recognition of the need to accept restraints. "The basic assumption for this kind of conflict-and it one that appears to correspond accurately with reality under existing conditions is the assumption of a calculating individual with a multiplicity of values, aware of the costs and risk as well as advantage and capable of drawing significant inferences from symbolic acts."¹⁵

The Soviet response to limited war was that there is no such thing as a limited nuclear war-given the magnitude of destruction, and if there was to be a nuclear attack upon the Soviet Union, the Soviets would preempt such an attack by launching a massive nuclear attack upon the United States. Given this declaratory policy of the Soviet Union, it is unlikely that the Soviets would have got into individual conflicts with the same motive that was ascribed to them. Limited war in the 19th c Century had low ideological content. However, the 1950s were witnessing a period in which alliances and enmities were fragile. The ideological argument between the East and West was considered fundamental and the positions were irreconcilable. It was not the symmetry of intentions and capabilities, but the possibility of mutual destruction that provided the incentive for restraint.

¹⁵ James King, "Limited War", Army, August 1957, L. Freedman, n.3., p.104.

Another difficulty that pointed to the inadequacies of the theorizing of 1950s was: what objectives were moderate enough to permit eventual compromise yet worthy enough to impel the necessary mobilization and risk taking that even a limited war required? If only a restricted amount was to be achieved and the stakes were small, would the effort be justified? If the stakes were high, could both the super powers be able to restrain themselves after an initial exchange of attack? The fact remained that as long as the object of a limited nuclear war was not to destroy the Soviet Union, there would always be another day when the crisis would erupt sending the two sides into another destructive war. If the object was to destroy the Soviet Union, then it would not be limited, as there would no victors. A limited war in the Cold War era was to be fought for victory to change the Cold War balance.

To Lawrence Freedman, the use of tactical nuclear weapons was in part generated due to the pressure from the budgetary constraints in the United States. However, he adds that there were also proponents in the intellectual community who wanted them. For instance, Bernard Brodie who says:

"whether or not we can relinquish strategic bombing as a way of war, we can hardly afford to adjure tactical use of such weapons without dooming ourselves and allies to a permanent inferiority to the Soviet Union and satellite-armies in Europe."

Brodie was under the assumption that the Soviet nuclear weapons

programme was in its infancy and that it would be not before the end the decade of the 1950s that the Soviets would have tactical weapons. There was also an implicit belief that such weapons helped the defender in case of an attack. It had proponents in the United Kingdom as well. P.M.S. Blackett and Denis Healey felt that an army equipped with tactical weapons could hold back an army many times its size.

Henry Kissinger tried to develop a comprehensive doctrine of the limited nuclear war. By taking the sea warfare model, Kissinger felt that limited nuclear war could be fought "in which self-contained units with great fire-power gradually gain the upper hand by destroying their enemy counterparts without physically occupying territory or establishing a front-line." With this strategy Kissinger hoped that nuclear warfare would be restricted to small units, they would be away from population centres, and the targets being small they would not be worthwhile for the enemy to attack with rapidity. He also thought that being self-contained they would not be subject to the pressures that emanate from land warfare models which require lines of supply which could be hit. By keeping cities away from the scene of attack, they could, Kissinger felt, be saved and the war would remain limited.¹⁶

16 Kissinger, n.10., p. .

However this strategy was grossly inadequate as it failed to take into account certain perceptions and other factors. Firstly, Kissinger, by making the cities the main focus, which was to be kept out of attack by the enemy was presupposing that the Soviets would follow their rules of war. Soviet pronouncements however, pointed exactly to the opposite. They clearly said that they would not abide by the rules framed by the United States. Hence the basic purpose of Kissinger's strategy would not be achieved. The supply lines for the sea warfare model of Kissinger would be replaced by other requirements which could be held hostage by the enemy. To protect the sea based delivery systems there would have to be support for these ships. Hence the logistical problem was still there. William Kaufmann, reviewing Kissinger's work emphasized the implausibility of civilians surviving a limited nuclear war with as much ease as in a conventional war. "In his version of warfare," airmen do not get panicky, and jettison their bombs, or hit wrong targets, missiles do not go astray, and heavily populated areas- whether rural or urban- do not suffer there by. Surely this is wishful thinking."¹⁷

The US Army at this time conducted two war game exercises- 'Operation Sage Brush' in Louisiana, US, and 'Carte Blanche' in West Germany. In Operation Sage Brush, seventy bombs of 40 kilotons yield were enough for the umpires to declare that all life in the State has ceased to exist.

17 William Kaufmann, "The crisis in military affairs", World Politics, X:4, July 1958, p.594.

In Operation Carte Blanche, 355 devices were detonated over West Germany, which even without residual effects left 1.7 million Germans dead, and 3.5 million wounded. This kind of destruction could hardly be called "limited" although the means employed in proportion to the arsenals of US at that time were considered limited. Three considerations should be kept in mind when the actual use of tactical nuclear weapons is contemplated. First, if they were of essentially defensive nature, as its doctrinal proposition states, then their use would be of little significance in regaining lost ground, as it would expose those parts of the territory captured by the enemy from becoming a nuclear battle ground leading to unprecedented destruction. Obviously, the use of such weapons in the reality of the situation could be contemplated in areas that were desolate, not strategic to the defending super power, which leaves only the continent of Asia and Africa as likely places where this confrontation can take place.

Secondly, the local consequences of the effects of the limited use of nuclear weapons would have to be taken into account. The simulated studies made in the case of Operation Carte Blanche would make the local leadership nervous about their possible use. This could lead to strong resistance for their actual use. Thirdly, with regard to actual tactics employed by the armies on the battlefield, simulated exercises have demonstrated that in the 'fog of war' one's own troops would be leaderless and supply lines would be disrupted due

to contamination.¹⁸

With the proliferation of possible ways of fighting a limited nuclear war, ironically, it saw the older advocates turning away from the concept itself. An example is Kissinger. Towards the last years of the 1950s he started placing more emphasis on conventional defence capabilities to supplement the existing nuclear threat. This did not mean that limited war in American strategic community has ceased to exist. There were justifications for its use, as the era of US superiority with regard to massive retaliation was over, the Soviets had built up a massive counter attacking arsenal capable of hitting all targets in the US.¹⁹ Two important theorists began having a significant impact on the American strategic community. Thomas Schelling put forward the role of bargaining in limited wars and talked of the nature and possibilities of tacit agreements. It was the result of interaction with the game theory. The other scholar, who also had a profound impact on the intellectual community was Herman Kahn. He put forward the idea that nuclear war does not mean apocalypse. He had a forty four layered escalatory ladder each having a recognized degree of destruction. In short, he was trying to sell to the American people the idea that a limited nuclear war could be fought, won and have survival for the

18 T.N.Dupuy, "Can America fight a limited Nuclear War?" Orbis, Spring, v:1, p.32.

19 Ian Clark, n.2, p.151.

American people.²⁰

The advent of the Kennedy Administration in the United States brought forth the debate on American nuclear strategy to a new high. It began with the McNamara doctrine espousing the cause of "limited counter force" or "no-cities". This appeared during 1961-62. Though it was only a transient doctrine fading out quickly, its importance lay in the fact that it laid the seeds for a "richer harvest in the 1970's".²¹ The "no-cities" doctrine was more of an attempt to create conventions in nuclear war limitation. He tried to reason that limitations as they appeared in traditional conflicts could also be applied to nuclear war. He outlined this policy in his Ann Arbor speech:

The US has come to the conclusion that, to the extent feasible, basic military strategy in a possible general nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. That is to say, principal military objectives... should be the destruction of the enemys military forces, not of his civilian population.(22)

McNamara was arguing for mutual restraints in fighting a limited nuclear war. Thomas Schelling in his book, Arms and

20 Thomas Schelling spelled out his ideas on bargaining in his book, The Strategy of Conflict (Cambridge, 1960), Herman Kahn put forward his escalation ladder thesis in his books, On Thermonuclear War (Princeton, 1960) and Thinking About the Unthinkable (London, 1962).

21 Ian Clark, n.2, p.152.

22 Henry A. Kissinger, The Troubled Partnership (New York, 1965), p.99.

Influence, goes further by saying that for McNamara, threshold for an escalation to general nuclear war need not be a major attack on the military installations. A limited war could be fought with more destruction and yet remain limited. He was of the opinion that "restraint could make sense in any war, of any size..."²³ Here again, as in the case of other doctrines that preceded the "no-cities" and the ones that were to follow it, there was an attempt made at understanding the Soviet position with regard to war. Soviet compliance, Soviet military thought and reciprocity was only thought in terms of a mirror image. An example of this thinking was that "it would be in their interests as well as ours to try to limit the terrible consequences of a nuclear exchange. By building into our forces a flexible capability, we at least eliminate the prospect that we could strike back in only one way, namely, against the entire Soviet target system including their cities. Such a prospect would give the Soviet Union no incentive to withhold attack against our cities in a first strike. We want to give them a better alternative..."²⁴

"Flexible Response" doctrine emerged as a reaction to Massive Retaliation on the ground that the United States ability to maintain the credibility of an all out nuclear

23 Thomas Schelling, Arms and Influence, (New Haven, 1966), p.162.

24 William W. Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, (New York: 1964), pp.92-3.

threat had reached its limits. In the Uncertain Trumpet Maxwell Taylor wrote of Dulles, "I hope that some military solution would eventually be found to permit lessened dependence on Massive Retaliation".²⁵ Flexible Response meant that the United States would withdraw Dulles's Massive Retaliation as the main deterrent to Soviet frontal aggression and would substitute a mixed threat consisting of possible conventional resistance, possible use of tactical nuclear weapons and later strategic retaliation. The point when it would go nuclear was an uncertain variable to complicate the enemy's problem by denying him pre-knowledge of US strategic intentions. Thus the deterrence formula evolved under flexible response had three ingredients: (1) the threat of a quick successful conventional response to enemy aggression; (2) the threat of a restrained nuclear attack within the theatre of combat if conventional forces should fail to hold back the enemy; (3) the threat of retaliation by strategic nuclear forces if events in the threat should continue to deteriorate.²⁶ The retargeting that occurred in response to the doctrine of flexible response, was embodied in the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP). This plan has been integral to the doctrinal position of the United States even during the heyday of the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) theory. To

25 Maxwell Taylor, quoted in Gerald Garvey, Strategy and the Defense Dilemma (Lexington, 1984), p.13.

26 Ibid., p.13.



Richard Betts, this was proof that "emphasis on nuclear warfighting and deterrence based on counter-military options, as opposed to countervalue, has fluctuated... but it has never been abandoned".²⁷ The basic guidelines for the strategic doctrines that were initiated during Robert McNamara's term as Secretary of Defense were derived from the critique of the strategy of "massive retaliation", which was later articulated by Senator John Kennedy during his Presidential campaign. Kennedy predicted,

Their (Soviet) missile power will be the shield from behind which they will slowly, but surely, advance - through Sputnik diplomacy, limited brush fire wars, indirect non-overt aggression, intimidation and subversion, internal revolution, increased prestige or influence, and the vicious blackmail of our allies. The periphery of the Free World will slowly be nibbled away... Each such Soviet move will weaken the West; but none will seem sufficiently significant by itself to justify our initiating a nuclear war which might destroy us. (28)

McNamara perceived this important change in policy with the belief that the President should not be forced into a general nuclear war due to the lack of alternatives. A President could also be reduced to passivity, if he did not want to start a self-destructive war and at the same time have no options to meet the threat. McNamara was intent on

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- 27 R.K.Betts, "Nuclear Peace : Mythology and Futurology", Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol.7, No.1, May 1979, pp.91-2.
- 28 John F.Kennedy, The Strategy of Peace, (New York,1960), pp.37-8.

creating options that would preserve "for as long as possible as wide a range of choice as possible...when the choice had to be made, it could be tuned to the circumstances of the moment."²⁹ The reason for this shift from the Dulles' policy was straightforward. Since Dulles' time there had been a declining interest in transforming any war into a nuclear contest. It was no longer arguable that the US would enjoy any significant advantages in such a contest. The entire McNamara strategy had its critics who argued that any kind of war plan to avoid damage required both sides to think in the same way. This was not to be, as the Soviets had always plugged the line that war could not be limited and its destruction minimized. Also the doctrine rested on the assumption of first strike, though publicly it was not stated as such. This could be seen as an aggressive or suspicious move by their adversaries. They would react to it which would lead to an unbridled arms race. The West Europeans were concerned also. The McNamara doctrine stressed the need to combat Soviet threat with conventional forces. The West Europeans were more concerned with the nuclear options. The concept of "extended deterrence" rested on American ability to use nuclear weapons in defence of Europe. Critics like Thomas Schelling talked of the role of "burning bridges" in emphasizing a commitment to stay in the fight. Creating an option could be seen as making allowance for moments of weakness.

29 Lawrence Freedman, n. 3, p. 232.

Thus the doctrine of "city avoidance" had its powerful critics who doubted whether it could stand the test of time.

The main features of the doctrine were: there would flexibility, discrimination and control in targeting. Reserves would be maintained and US command and control facilities would be protected and those of the Soviet Union also would be spared. "The options created allowed for attacks ranging from those against the Soviet retaliatory forces, through air defense installations distant from cities, to those near cities, to command and control systems, to an all-out "spasm" attack."³⁰ McNamara also talked about approaching nuclear exchanges in terms of bargaining, "We may seek to terminate a war on favourable terms by using our forces as a bargaining weapon - by threatening further attack."³¹ McNamara realized that any war would have to be determined somehow - short of destruction, the only way of terminating it would be through the political process which would involve bargaining. This strategy had three other distinct drawbacks - firstly, the very purpose of the new strategy created an impression that there was a close link between counter force attacks and first strike, which meant that it would have to be a decisive surprise blow, to disarm the enemy and put him at the attackers mercy. This constituted not a strategy that

30 Ibid., p.235.

31 Robert McNamara, "Defense Arrangements of the North Atlantic Community", Department of State Bulletin 47, July 9, 1962, pp.67-8.

would deter war but increase the chances of war. Morton Halperin pointed out that such a strategy in the eventuality of a conflict envisages to attack the enemies strategic forces which are vulnerable, military targets or economic targets not close to population centres. Here the problem of discerning which of these targets are most relevant to Soviet intermediate and strategic attack could lead to a miscalculation that could lead to escalation.³² A third reason being that the incentive to target strategic forces for purposes of damage limitation, would not be distinguished from a first strike attack. This would lead to an escalation into a strategic war. The influence behind this attack of damage limitation being the fear that despite all the options - conventional and nuclear - a general nuclear war could not be ruled out.

Though there was retreat from the doctrine of adding flexibility to American strategic options, a powerful section of the American strategic community believed in the variety of scenarios described to effectively limit a nuclear war short of full scale destruction and also maintain flexible options. The post-City Avoidance doctrine was a period in which the Mutual Assured Destruction Doctrine (MAD) held sway. In part this change came about as a realization in US official circles that the Soviets in this post-Khrushchev

32 Morton Halperin, "The "No Cities" Doctrine", New Republic, October 1962.

phase had launched on a massive programme to build missiles. The painful and humiliating retreat from Cuba in 1962 made them achieve this programme with single minded zeal. The result was that by 1965-66, it was assumed in the West that the advances in the Soviet missile armoury were big enough to threaten Western society completely. Hence the MAD paradigm was adopted.

The wheel had turned a full circle. The Mutual Assured Destruction Model was again coming under increasing attack from those who favoured the notion of flexibility in the strategic doctrine of the US. However two new factors were responsible for this renewed emphasis. Firstly, the drive of technology had impelled in the strategic thinkers the belief that deterrence is unsatisfactory when based upon "unusable" weapons. Advocates of this line were William Van Cleave and Roger Barnett who saw deterrence as a product of capability and credibility. "The greater the capability to use nuclear forces in a rational and non-apocalyptic manner/fashion, the greater the credibility and thus the strength of deterrence."³³ Secondly, a President was openly talking about the need for new options rather than being presented with all or nothing choices. Albert Wohlstetter argued on these lines too, saying that a policy of MAD which is a policy

33 William Van Cleave and Roger W. Barnett, "Strategic Adaptability", Orbis, xviii: 3 Autumn 1974, p.655.

"of unrestrained, indiscriminate attack on Russian civilians, executed without reserve, with no attempt to induce restraint in the Soviet leadership, can serve no purpose of State under any circumstances. If MAD means a policy of using strategic force only as a reflex to kill populations it calls for a course of action under every circumstance of attack that makes sense in none. Attacking it even more trenchantly, he commented, "not even Ghenghis Khan tried to avoid military targets and to concentrate only on killing civilians".³⁴

Thus the debate on counterforce strategy was whether the purpose of strategic policy was war-avoidance or alternatively, the creation of the capacity for war - fighting. This dualism was characterized by J.Garnett as "limited war strategies were advanced as a response to two quite different pressures. First they developed because if deterrence failed, men wanted an alternative to annihilation, and second, they developed because many believed that the ability to wage limited war enhanced deterrence."³⁵ This view was supported by Albert Wohlstetter and Geoffrey Best,⁶ who maintained that the pursuit in restraint in war is supportive of restraint in recourse to war, and as such, the two goals are complementary rather than antagonistic.³⁶ This particular thinking towards

34 Albert Wohlstetter, "Threats and Promises of Peace: Europe and America in a New Era", Orbis, Winter 1974, p.1133 and 1127.

35 J.Garnett, in Baylis et al. Contemporary Strategy, (London, 1975), pp.116-117.

36 Geoffrey Best, Humanity in Warfare (London, 1980), p.

nuclear war had its opponents too. Foremost among them were those who criticized this approach on the ground that thinking about the conduct of limited war might well hasten its initiation. Barry Carter denounced the counter-force option because "the Administration's promotion of the option and its general public advocacy of a counter force strategy might have a pervasive, if subtle, tendency to reduce the inhibitions against the use of nuclear weapons".³⁷ Other leading scholars who were against this option were Wolfgang Panofsky and Herbert Scoville. Scoville wrote,

The initiation of nuclear war at any level is a disaster that is more likely to happen if national leaders can fool themselves into believing that it might be kept small and that they might come out the victors. (38)

James Schlesinger became Secretary of Defense in President Nixon's Administration in 1973. Taking advantage of a study commissioned by the National Security Council in April 1971, called "strategic objectives", Schlesinger took this unique opportunity to turn theory into practice. By January 1974 he was able to publicly state that there was a "change in the strategies of the United States with regard to the hypothetical employment of central strategic forces".

37 Barry Carter, "Nuclear Strategy and Nuclear War", Scientific American, May 1974, p.30.

38 Herbert Scoville, "Flexible Madness", Foreign Affairs, Spring 1974, p.175.

He characterized this change as having a wider objective viz. as wide a range of nuclear options, from the very small to the very large, and that the bias was on the development of the smaller strikes which were to be counterforce than the counter-city model. This was intended to reduce the chances of uncontrolled escalation and "hit the meaningful targets with a sufficient accuracy-yield combination to destroy only the intended target and to avoid widespread collateral damage." Contingencies were also made to include accidental acts, the escalation from conventional warfare to nuclear resort, a challenge to "a nuclear test of wills" by ill-informed or cornered and desperate leaders" involving the nuclear equivalent of "shots across the bow".

Its critics attacked on three points: the unreality of the belief that nuclear war could be controlled; if it were believed that nuclear war could be controlled at tolerable levels of damage this could increase the risk of premature use of these weapons; and renewed stress of counter force options could raise the fear of first-strike ambitions, introducing the danger of an arms race and jeopardize SALT.³⁹ Bernard Brodie questioned it in a different way: he termed counter-force as "strategic fiction" and questioned whether "expanding the President's military options is always a good thing", because of the burden it put on his "wisdom". The critics were quick to realize that the central problem of

39 L. Freedman, n.3, p.379.

limited war was one of policy relating to ends and means and not of administrative fiat, that the theorists had resorted to. Kolkowicz has pointed out that national traditions also play a part in the views that the Americans hold about limited controlled war. He locates this tendency in the main springs of American intellectual thought and traditions - "the roots of modern American strategic theory and doctrine lie in the scientific spirit of the Enlightenment and in the optimistic tradition of the more recent period which envisaged man's ability to control, manage and order conflict by rational scientific and technological means".⁴⁰

The new mode of warfare as enunciated in the Schlesinger Doctrine required some sort of Soviet connivance as it takes two to keep a nuclear war limited. However, the Soviet public pronouncements were hostile to this concept. Soviet military thought had a diametrically opposite view on the nature of limited war. There was some indication of Soviet planning on the possibilities that a nuclear war could occur and containing it before it engulfed the Soviet Union. As the Soviet strategic doctrine stresses on victory the American perceptions of avoiding collateral damage either of military installations or enemy population did not have the same priority in the Soviet thinking. Nor did they perceive the idea of withholding forces in order to allow time for negotiations to be attractive. Their view was that military force

40 R.Kolkowicz, "On Limited War" unpublished Conference paper, quoted in Ian Clark, n.2, p.160.

was the result of the breakdown of diplomacy. They have constantly stressed on the belief that once a nuclear war has broken out the object is to give the enemy a crushing rebuff. Colonel Sidorenko's The Offensive dealt with this aspect at length.

As the decade of the 70s moved on, the Schlesinger Doctrine was made increasingly inoperative as its critics noted that temptation to gain military advantage in the attack would not keep the war limited. The Doctrine had three basic levels of escalation: aid to conventional forces engaged in major fighting, probably in Europe, destruction of remaining enemy strategic forces to limit further damage; attainment of effective military superiority at a particular point in the escalation ladder. To attain each of these would require sizeable strikes.

Under Gerald Ford the doctrine of limited nuclear war did not see any refinements. Though the counter force strategy remained a part of the US military doctrine, there was not much movement towards converting theory into practice. But the question on how to use these weapons of mass destruction in war in a controlled way still nagged Pentagon officials and academics. Even the Carter Administration faced this dilemma.

Jimmy Carter came into the White House with the avowed aim of doing away with nuclear weapons. In the beginning he

toyed with the idea of minimum deterrence. He even dismissed the notion of limited nuclear war. In 1979, Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown said,

counter force and damage limiting campaigns have been put forward as the nuclear equivalents of traditional warfare. But their proponents find it difficult to tell us that what objectives an enemy would seek in launching such campaigns, how these campaigns would end, or how any resulting symmetries could be made meaningful. (41)

However, despite this disavowal of the idea of a limited nuclear strike, the influence of the Schlesinger Doctrine was pervasive in the Pentagon. Using the argument that there was nothing in the development of the Soviet force structure to suggest that they completely ruled out limited nuclear encounter. The key innovation that appeared was the induction of strikes against political and economic targets rather than solely against military targets. What emerged out of this thinking was the Presidential Directive 59 which was approved by Jimmy Carter in July 1980. The whole exercise was to improve deterrence by improving the US capacity for a prolonged but limited nuclear war.

The so called "Countervailing strategy" also known as PD 59 which was signed by President Jimmy Carter on 25 July 1980 has been portrayed as a "significant shift in the US nuclear policy away from MAD towards a doctrine based on the

41 Harold Brown, Department of Defense Annual Report FY 1980, p.76.

capability and intent to fight - and win - a limited nuclear war fought through the medium of counter-force/point target exchanges. However, PD 59 does not itself represent a radical shift in American targeting policy. It is rather, the result of several years of study within the Pentagon and NSC... beginning with the Nixon Administration. This preoccupation with the rigidity and inadequacy of American strategic policy was expressed in February 1970 by Nixon in his state of the world message to Congress. "Should a President in the event of a nuclear attack, be left with the single option of ordering the mass destruction of enemy civilians in the face of the certainty that it would be followed by the mass slaughter of Americans?"⁴²

Studies were underway that led to the signing of the National Security decision memorandum 242 by Nixon on 17 January 1974. This was supplemented by the promulgation of the policy Guidance for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons which was signed by then Defense Secretary James Schlesinger on 4 April 1975, which in turn led to a new Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP-5) which took effect on 1 January 1975. The general purpose of this series of revisions was indicated in the Department of Defense Annual Report for FY 1975:

42 Robert C. Williams and Philip C. Pantelon, eds., The American Atom - A Documentary History of Nuclear Policies from the Discovery of Fission to the Present 1939-1984 (Philadelphia, 1984), p.227.

What we need is a series of measured responses to aggression which bear some relationship to provocation, having prospect of terminating hostilities before general nuclear war breaks out and leave some possibility of restoring deterrence. (43)

Following the Nuclear Targeting Planning Review of 1977-79, PD 59 continues these themes, arguing for greater targeting of military assets (soft and hard), war fighting industry assets, and political and C³ centres. In this sense, there is a new emphasis on the first three general targets of the SIOP - Soviet nuclear forces, conventional forces, military and political leadership centres at the expense but not to the exclusion of the fourth set - the Soviet industrial and economic base. It must be recalled that fully 50% of the 40,000 targets of the SIOP remain dedicated to non-nuclear force targets.⁴⁴

The MAD doctrine was de-emphasized when it became clear that the growth in Soviet capability and the costs - fiscal and political - involved in maintaining a capacity for nuclear victory were unsupportable. Soviet military targets remained in SIOP, however, with a capacity for sole attack of these within the confines of existing technology. The Countervailing strategy involves multiplication and refinement of limited nuclear options using "extant computer

43 Department of Defense Annual Report FY 1975, p.46.

44 Robert C. Williams et al. eds., n.42, p.234.

capabilities and multiple targeting memories", there is nothing inherent in the policy which is radically at variance with the prior evolutions in American doctrine. At best the tone and context of the announcement may have significant impact.

According to Williams, PD 59 must be seen as part of the response of the Western Alliance to growing concern for the credibility and flexibility of the US nuclear guarantee in Central Europe. In this connection, the philosophy behind the PD 59 is similar to that embodied in NATO LRTNF decisions and refinements in the tactical nuclear weapons area, designed to strengthen the fabric of deterrence by increasing the number and strength of ladders in the escalation process.

In this sense according to Williams, there is a general support for such a strategy within Europe, which is to be contrasted with the antagonism which greeted efforts during the McNamara period to institute somewhat similar policies at the nuclear level. This reflects increased concern in Western Europe over perceived Soviet advances at the intercontinental and Euro-strategic levels, which have potentially obfuscated traditional European fears that war may be waged in Europe while preserving Soviet and American homelands.⁴⁵

45 Ibid., p.228.

Thus the countervailing theory is the reflection of the following tenets of the deterrence theory: 1) Deterrence is best preserved by some measure of proportionately in response which maintains the credibility of the threatened use of nuclear forces by meeting each threat with roughly the same level of response. It is necessary, therefore, to develop a capability and policy which does not leave significant gaps in strategic forces or policies for their use which can be politically or militarily exploited by the enemy. Another object of the limited nuclear war doctrine is to indicate to the enemy the capability and willingness to respond at levels, less than all out war, so as to deny the enemy his objectives. Thus it was seen to be more rational and controllable which would include some kind of strategic bargaining into nuclear war. Thus PD 59 was thought to enhance credibility of the US extended deterrent in Europe.

Although elements of PD 59 have characterized major concerns with and modifications to, American nuclear doctrine since 1970, a series of recent developments in the strategic environment have provoked greater interest in the development of limited war strategies: (1) improvements in Soviet conventional and Euro-strategic capabilities (SS-20's, Backfire bomber) which simultaneously pose the perceived danger of a capability for military and political pressure in the area and heighten anxiety over the credibility of the US nuclear guarantee. 2) peripheral conflict involving the USSR particularly in the Persian Gulf/South West Asia region;

3) growing Soviet strategic capabilities which through a combination of numbers accuracy, yield and throw weight, indicate atleast a theoretical capability to destroy virtually the entire American land based missile force. PD 59 while largely a response to these developments, may also have been intended to variously: 1) counter Republican criticism of the Carter Administration defense policy; 2) serve as a signal to the USSR that the US is willing doctrinally to meet Soviet capabilities on their own terms; 3) act as a general signal in the post Afghanistan environment; 4) and pave the way for significant upgrading of American limited war option capabilities.⁴⁶

The technologies that would receive a push from PD 59 and which are perceived to be needed for any radical improvement in American capabilities to conduct limited nuclear war options includes: 1) the MKA-12A re-entry vehicles whose deployment on Minuteman III and possibly the MX and/or Trident D-5 missiles would be necessary to pose a significant threat against Soviet SS 18/19 ICBMs. 2) Trident D-5 SLBMs which could be used against hardened command and control bunkers and Soviet ICBMs like the SS-17; 3) MX development in sufficient numbers to ensure survivability; 4) a manned penetrating bomber which could be used for follow up strikes against point targets; 5) improved US command and control facilities and procedures along the lines of the PD 53 and 58; 6) developments

46 Ibid., p.230.

in ballistic missile defense; 7) and increased production facilities for strategic nuclear materials and such special materials as tritium required for war head production which are currently in short supply; significant increased in production will be required for new weapons.

The entire shopping list that PD 59 provides makes up for the decades of haggling that has left the Pentagon without getting all that it wanted. All indications point to the fact that PD 59 calls for upgrading of US arsenals using the bogey of Soviet threat both to the American mainland and other areas of vital interest to the United States. Thus PD 59 was more of an arms acquisition programme built up by the Carter Administration using the disturbed political conditions existing between the two super powers.

Apart from this huge shopping list that the Pentagon has provided for, there are other difficulties that PD 59 faces with respect to its limiting nuclear war. It is difficult to see how a controlled nuclear war can take place if the capacity for that control is eliminated. PD 59 states that one of the objectives of America's new countervailing strategy is to knock out Soviet political command and control centres. Secondly, political command and control facilities are hardened and dispersed on the Soviet side with their location unknown or such that there are so many plausible locations for actual leadership location that there would not be enough warheads to target them all. Thirdly, such

facilities as are known are located with major population centres, this would obviously hamper attempts at limiting the conflict. Fourthly, significant casualties may be expected from any American attack against Soviet economic or military assets e.g. a very limited strike against 10 Soviet refineries and storage centres could lead to 1.5 million fatalities. Damage levels, combined with inevitable difficulties in attack assessment might make identification of limited strikes difficult - perhaps provoking an all out Soviet response and provoke serious doubts as to how "limited" strikes of this sort would be perceived, even assuming accurate attack assessment. By merely identifying the need for sufficient forces and flexibility for limited war prosecution, PD 59 does not indicate an upper limit for such strikes.⁴⁷

Apart from official Washington that spells out the doctrines that the United States would use to deter war, there are at the two ends of the spectrum of American strategic thought groups of academics who feel that the current strategy followed by the United States is either not strong enough or that the US doctrine is based on the dangerous delusion that victory in the nuclear age is possible. The far right position in American strategic thought is represented by the

47 L.Hagen, "PD 59 and the Countervailing Strategy, Continuity or Change"? Department of National Defense, Canada, Project Report No. PR 10, (Ottawa, 1981), quoted in Williams et al, n.42, p.233.

neo-conservatives who have gained ascendancy with Ronald Reagan becoming President and the other side is represented by the eastern establishment liberals or "arms controllers" who have strong leanings towards the liberal wing of the Democratic party in the US.

While discussing the doctrine of limited nuclear war, it would be apt to try and follow the rationale for their respective beliefs, despite competing claims from the other side that they are "naive" or "bizarre".

The advent of the neo-conservatives to the forefront of the debate on "winning" a limited nuclear war has to be credited to the Reagan Revolution, that characterized a belligerent and more hardline approach to world problems. It was the reaction to a decade, of what they perceived "surrendering" American superiority to the Soviets. The far right position advocates have been active ever since the evolution of the US strategic doctrine began. Its high priest was Herman Kahn, who formed the Hudson Institute, and with his book, On Thermonuclear War, rationalized the concept of war in the nuclear age in the minds of the American public. Its present day advocates include Colin S. Gray, Richard Burt, Richard Pipes and Keith Payne.

To these strategic experts, even the PD 59, by far the most bold approach taken to "winning" a nuclear war, does not go far enough. Their basic argument is that even "appending a flexible targeting concept to the mutual vulnerability

paradigm does not provide an adequate solution to the self-deterrence dilemma; and the most recent US declaratory policy stemming from the PD 59 does very little per se to correct the fundamental inadequacy of American strategic thought".⁴⁸ According to Payne, the "war fighting" oriented declaratory policy of PD 59 will not solve US self-deterrence unless it involves a commitment to effective damage limitation and damage denial, which PD 59 does not address itself to.

The proponents of this position feel that in the event of a counterforce exchange between the super powers, the Americans would not gain any thing because they feel that America would not survive the resulting escalatory process. "Threatening the Soviets with a counter-political control deterrent as is the orientation of PD 59 may well be to threaten what the Soviets "really" value. However, an American President should have no interest in executing that threat unless the US could discipline the Soviet strategic response, survive the conflict, and ensure the possibility of a relatively more acceptable postwar world order."⁴⁹

They feel that while the US declaratory posture is to deny the USSR a "theory of victory" it is however conspicuous by its absence about US chance of survival and the

48 Keith Payne, Nuclear Deterrence in US-Soviet Relations (Boulder, Colorado, 1982), p.194.

49 Ibid., p.194.

attainment of political objectives. It is also felt that augmenting US and Allied conventional forces in distant regions is not likely to compensate for withdrawing the US nuclear umbrella. They reason that US nuclear forces have been stationed in the European theatre to offset the geographical advantage that the USSR holds and also, they realize that to beef up the conventional forces, the amount would be astronomical having very little political advantages. Thus they argue that any concept of deterrence must be adequate to meet Soviet threat, that is credible, across the spectrum of threat. They argue for a more balanced approach to offense and defense. This line of reasoning is taken from Herman Kahn, who in his book On Thermonuclear War, said that irrespective of the provocation that the USSR projects, it would be irrational for the US to engage in a strategic nuclear escalation, unless they had made preparations to survive the Soviet threat.⁵⁰

According to Henry Rowen, there was an emphasis on damage limitation in US declared policy prior to the Assured Vulnerability model of the 1960s. He contends that the Kennedy Administration sought to provide a clear differentiation in the targeting options on cities and military bases, and sought to limit damage to the American homeland through civil defense

50 Herman Kahn, On Thermonuclear War, (Princeton, 1961), pp.132-133.

programmes and counter-force targeting plans.⁵¹ They quote McNamara's speech at Ann Arbor to provide the essential thrust to their strategy.

The US has come to the conclusion that to the extent feasible, basic military strategy in a possible general nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past.* (52)

In short, they believe that the capability to deny victory to the opponent while protecting US societal assets is considered the most effective means of deterring the Soviet Union.

To paraphrase Colin S. Gray, the key concept of the classical strategy (as the neo-conservatives call it) is 'escalation dominance'. Escalation dominance means that the ~~US~~ US should provide an effective deterrent across the spectrum of threat because it could credibly threaten to "up the ante" in response to a limited provocation. The Soviet Union would be forced to decide whether to risk a not incredible American threat to escalate regardless of the level of Soviet attack. In short, escalation dominance would provide Soviet leaders with an overwhelming incentive to prefer conciliation rather than escalation in any conflict where deterrence can operate. Unlike Assured Vulnerability or Flexible

51 Henry Rowen, "The Evolution of Strategic Nuclear Doctrine" in Laurence Martin ed., Strategic Thought in the Nuclear Age, Baltimore Md., 1979, p.145.

52 R. McNamara, Payne, n.48, p.198.

Targeting, the classical strategy approach to deterrence is predicated upon the capability to pursue a non-suicidal process of war termination if war occurs and proceeds to a military decision.⁵³

Rebutting the claim made by its critics that the classical strategy has callous disregard for the number of lives lost in the event of a nuclear war, it states that classical strategy is not an advocacy of the acceptability of war, it is a recognition that deterrence can fail, and in that event, the most important objective would be to save lives.⁵⁴

Thus the force posture that the classical strategy envisages would entail a counter political/military deterrence threat via a heavily counterforce targeting policy, and a survivable hard target kill capability complemented by both active and passive defenses i.e. air defense, ballistic missile defense and civil defense.⁵⁵ They also talk about incorporating high energy laser or particle beam technology in the Ballistic Missile Defense(BMD).

53 Colin S.Gray, "Nuclear Strategy: A case for a Theory of Victory", International Security, 4 no. 1, Summer 1979, p.145.

54 Herman Kahn, "Some Comments on Controlled War", Limited Strategic War, (New York 1962), p.143.

55 Philip Klass, "Ballistic Missile Defense Tests Set", Aviation Week and Space Technology 112, no.24, June 16, 1980.

Survivability would be a critical characteristic of the offensive capabilities in such a force posture. Survivability would be essential in denying the Soviet Union any expectation that it could achieve its primary objective of changing the correlation of forces decisively in a preemptive attack. Denying the Soviet Union its requirement for "victory" should provide an effective offensive deterrent threat, and a balanced approach to offense and defense should render that deterrent credible.⁵⁶

The other end of the spectrum consists of those experts, former diplomats and military officers, who believe that the refinement of policies and scenarios of nuclear warfighting would only lead to the possibility of increased use of nuclear weapons. They decry the advocacy of preparation for "rational" nuclear warfare.⁵⁷ Leon Sloss, who once headed Jimmy Carter's Nuclear Targeting Policy Review for the Department of Defense feels that "the emphasis has shifted from the survivability necessary to assure that we can launch a single preplanned strike to the endurance and involve a series of nuclear exchanges."⁵⁸

56 Payne, n.48, p.199.

57 The extreme advocacy for such preparations is found in Colin S. Gray and Keith Payne, "Victory is Possible" Foreign Policy, No.39, Summer 1980, pp.14-27.

58 Leon Sloss, "Carter's Nuclear Policy: Going from MAD to Worse? No: Its evolutionary not revolutionary, aims to strengthen deterrence", Los Angeles Times, August 31, 1980.

According to Rene' Louis Beres, the current US strategic nuclear policy rests on the assumption that the Soviets might have something to gain by launching a limited first strike attack on the US or its allies. This assumption overlooks the fact that the Soviets do not share the American view on controlled nuclear conflict.⁵⁹

Secondly, the reason advocated for a limited strike capability is the Soviet willingness to use these weapon first. If their object is to attack first, the Soviet must be in a position to effectively destroy possible American ICBM's, which according to Sidney Drell, testifying before the Senate Sub-committee on Arms Control, would have to launch an attack that would lead to approximately 18.3 million American fatalities. Even a counter-force assault of this magnitude would still allow for US ICBMs to constitute an absurdly destructive retaliatory force. Given the prospect for retaliation, the Soviets in the first place would have no incentive to launch a counter-force attack upon the US.

Paul Warnke, former Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency has stated,

59 Louis Rene Beres, "Tilting towards Thanatos : America's Countervailing Strategy", in Klaus Knorr ed., Power, Strategy and Security, (Princeton, 1983), p.83.

scenarios for limited strategic exchange between the two countries are inherently implausible. Any Soviet attack that would leave untouched the majority of our strategic nuclear delivery vehicles would be an act of insane provocation. To have even a theoretical chance of taking out our more than 1000 land based ICBMs, the Soviets, would have to launch 2000 to 3000 accurate warheads of high yield. This could hardly be described as a limited nuclear war. It would deserve and would receive atleast equally massive response. (60)

Another point on which the arms controllers attack the present policy is the perception they have of the Soviets being deterred by the threat of limited American counterforce reprisals than by the threat of overwhelming total retaliation. All military journals of the Soviet Union have made it clear that the Soviet Union would not play the strategic game with US rules. They have made it clear that once the nuclear threshold has been crossed they would retaliate with all out nuclear war.⁶¹ Bernard Brodie observed,

Soviet commentary on the limited war thinking emanating from the West has thus far been uniformly hostile and decisive. Especially derided has been the thought that wars might remain limited while being fought with atomic weapons. (62)

60 Paul Warnke, "Carter's Nuclear Policy : Going from MAD to Worge? Yes: The Revision of US strategy implies a Belief in Limited War", Los Angeles Times, August 31, 1980.

61 On the earliest articles that appeared on the subject was by Col.V.Mochalov and Maj.V.Dashichev, "The smoke screen of the American Imperialists", Red Star, December 1957, quoted in Louis Rene Beres, "Tilting Towards Thanatos", p.84.

62 Bernard Brodie, Strategy in the Missile Age, (Princeton, 1959), p.322.

Even a contemporary Sovietologist Richard Pipes has characterized the Soviet position, "In the Soviet view, a nuclear war would be total....Limited nuclear war, flexible response, escalation, damage limitation, and all the other numerous refinements of US strategic doctrine find no place in its Soviet counterpart..."⁶³

The classical strategy states that there must be war survivable/damage limitation for deterrence to have credibility. They want renewed commitment on BMD, Civil Defense and continuing reliance on nuclear first use. These American intentions to place a large percentage of Soviet strategic forces in jeopardy would make the deterrence that exists in the main due to the survivable and enduring retaliatory capability, tenuous, which could provide the USSR with a heightened incentive to strike first. A counter-force capability is likely to serve only the country that strikes first. Used in retaliation, counter-force targeted warheads would only hit empty silos.

The other aspect of PD 59 which has come in for sharp criticism is "to destroy the ability of the Soviet leadership to continue to exercise political control over its domestic and 'colonial' territory - either by killing the leadership itself making it impossible for the leadership to communicate

63 Richard Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks it Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War", Commentary, Vol.64, July 1977.

with its subordinates, or by destroying the means by which the leadership's orders are carried out".⁶⁴ Such a rationale would go against the possibility of preserving the prospects for limited, controlled nuclear conflict.

The Reagan Administration's funding to implement the "crisis relocation capability" has also come in for criticism. Rather than strengthen deterrence by demonstrating US preparedness, plans for crisis relocation may underscore Soviet fears of an American first strike. Even if large scale civilian evacuation plans were workable, and if a government directed civilian exodus several days before a nuclear war would not degenerate into chaos, a Soviet nuclear attack could still doom virtually every American.

Louis Rene Beres attacks the notion that nuclear war could somehow be endured or "won". With a great deal of scientific and medical evidence that now exists, the unanimous conclusions of all experts is that nuclear war at any level would have intolerable consequences. The United States National Academy of Sciences published a report in 1975 called "Long Term Worldwide Effects of Multiple Nuclear Weapons Detonations" which predicted "a horrendous calamity:

64 Jeffrey Richelson, "The Dilemmas of Counterpower Targeting", Comparative Strategy, 11, No.2, 1980, pp.226-27.

a hypothetical exchange involving the detonation of many nuclear weapons. In the worst case considered, about one half of all nuclear weapons in current strategic arsenals viz. 500 to 1000 weapons of yield 10 to 20 megatons each ... are exchanged among the participants. No report can portray the enormity, the utter horror which must be fall the targeted areas and adjoining territories."⁶⁵

The Office of Technology Assessment of the US Congress after studying the effects of "limited" nuclear exchanges came to the conclusion that the effects would be "enormous". The impact of a small attack on economic targets would make "economic recovery possible, but the economic damage and social dislocation would be immense."

America's counterforce strategy is based on the assumption that the Soviet first strike will be limited. Hence the need to have a second strike capability. But the declared policy of Soviets has always advocated an all out nuclear strike in case war breaks out. The Soviets are fully aware of the fact that if they do not destroy as many American ICBMs as possible they would be inviting retribution from the Americans. So why would they in the first place strike with limited means. The credibility of the case against

65 Philip Handler, Long Term worldwide Effects of Multiple Nuclear Weapons Detonations, National Academy of Sciences, (Washington, August 1975).

limited nuclear war was underscored in March 1982, by a five day war game played by American command authorities. Code-named "Ivy League" the game represented the first time in 25 years that the US command structures and communications systems that would be used in nuclear war were given a complete exercise. According to a report by the Wall Street Journal, the exercise began with the assumptions of rising international tensions and both the USA and USSR began mobilizing for war. After Soviet attacks on American forces overseas, war was declared, a US ship was sunk in the North Atlantic, and US troops overseas were attacked by troops using chemical warfare. The President then ordered a "low-level" nuclear retaliation and the war escalated to uncontrolled dimensions. After a 5000 megaton missile attack on the US, the game ended with the killing of the president and his successors, resulting in worldwide obliteration.⁶⁶

The Soviet fears of an American first strike might also be self-fulfilling. Such fears might occasion their own adoption of launch-on-warning strategies, expanding the risk not only of accidental war, but also of preemption by the US. To Beres, American strategy "rather than strengthen deterrence... will inevitably increase the likelihood of nuclear

66 "US Reportedly Tried Practising Doomsday War", The Wall Street Journal, March 26, 1982.

war with the USSR.⁶⁷

Another criticism of the advocates of the limited nuclear war strategy is that they are prone to stress weapons effects on the enemy. They have not been merely as thorough in describing what might happen if the enemy responded with tactical nuclear weapons. They have also ignored the effects a two-sided exchange will have on people, industry and society. Michael Howard has made this trenchant criticism of Western nuclear strategys

works about nuclear war and deterrence normally treat their topic as an activity taking place almost entirely in the technological dimension. From their writings not only the socio-political but the operational elements have quite disappeared. The technological capabilities of nuclear arsenals are treated as being decisive in themselves, involving a calculation of outcome so complete and discrete that neither the political motivation for the conflict nor the social factors involved in its conduct indeed the military activity of fighting are taken into account. (68)

Beres questions the political validity of the countervailing strategy "the policy's plan to secure Soviet 'good behaviour' by the threat of engaging in a nuclear war is a unique case of the augmentum ad baculum. This appeal to force is not only intrinsically unrelated to the merits of

67 Louis Rene Beres, Mimicking Sisyphus : America's Countervailing Strategy, (Lexington Mass, 1983), p.21.

68 Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", Foreign Affairs, Summer 1979, p.975.

the desired course of Soviet conduct it is also destined to fail". He further questions the attempts to play to the American public. "... manipulation of public opinion for domestic political considerations. Here the correctness or reasonableness of the policy is defended by an emotional appeal "to the people" for sustaining defense expenditures of \$ 1.6 trillion over 5 years as patriotic duty. Describing the massive build up of Soviet strategic forces as proof positive of their aggressive designs Ronald Reagan has told the American people that the Soviets "will lie, cheat and commit any crime" to further their objectives. This appeal to the gallery seeking widespread assent to a conclusion about our nuclear policy that is unsupported by valid argument..."⁶⁹ "US insecurity rises with the dollars we impute to the Soviet military effort. But in actual fact Soviet expenditures are not known. The US intelligence community reconstructs the Soviet military budget by asking 'what would it cost to buy the Soviet defense establishment in the US at US prices?'. Our intelligence analysts pretend that the Soviets procure their tanks from GM and they pay their US volunteer wages to their conscripts."⁷⁰

Rear Admiral Eugene Carroll USN (Retd.) speaking for the Center for Defense Information expressed apprehension

69 Beres, n.67, p.27.

70 Richard Barnett, Real Security: Restoring American Power in the Dangerous Decades (New York, 1981), p.17.

that "the move away from the concept of nuclear deterrence to nuclear warfighting, coupled with the Administration's strong anti-Soviet rhetoric and TNF modernization program ... is increasing the risk to nuclear war in the world".⁷¹

Finally Michael Howard, summing up the dilemmas of the US strategic policy of fighting a nuclear war said, "When I read the flood of scenarios in strategic journals about first strike capabilities, counter-force or countervailing, flexible response, escalation dominance and the rest of the postulates of nuclear theology I ask myself in bewilderment: this war they are describing what is it about? The defense of Japan? Access to the Gulf? If so, why is this goal not mentioned and why is the strategy not related to the progress of the conflict in these regions? But if it is not related to this kind of specific object, what are we talking about? Has not the bulk of US thinking been exactly what Clausewitz described - something that, because it is divorced from any political context is pointless and devoid of sense?"⁷²

Soviet Response to Limited Nuclear War:

The Soviets since 1955 have always said in their declaratory statements that it is impossible to use nuclear

71 Quoted in Beres, n.67, p.5.

72 Micheal Howard, "On Fighting a Nuclear War, International Security, 5, No.4, Spring 1981, p.7.

weapons on a limited tactical scale because of their highly destructive nature. Major General N. Talensky writing in January 1955 against NATO's "trip-wire" strategy involving the use of tactical nuclear weapons, argued that the very nature militated against the likelihood of their being used on a tactical scale.⁷³

They have always believed that the use of nuclear weapons in a limited nuclear war may escalate into their use on the strategic level. To quote Major General N. Talensky again,

the present development of the means of atomic attack makes it possible to strike powerful blows across oceans as well. Consequently, the American atom-maniacs have no grounds for considering that if they precipitate atomic war, the territory of the US will remain invulnerable. In a war against a strong adversary, it is impossible in our days to count on striking blows at the enemy without being subjected to his counter blows, which might be of greater impact.⁽⁷⁴⁾

American experts have tended to see Soviet pronouncements as propaganda statements either to hide their own shortcomings in missiles with regard to accuracy, or use such statements to make the US public dissuade the US Government from initiating limited wars for the suppression of "so-called wars of

73 Maj. Gen. N. Talensky, quoted in T. Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 (Baltimore, 1970), pp. 144-145.

74 N. Talensky, "Atomic and Conventional Arms", International Affairs (Moscow) No. 1, January 1955, p. 29.

national liberation or from preparing to defend Soviet initiated local wars."⁷⁵

The most prominent statement by a Soviet leader on the question of uncontrolled escalation was by Nikita Khrushchev who while addressing the Supreme Soviet in January 1960, dismissed limited wars as "nonsense". He clearly stated that if war with nuclear weapons was initiated against Communist countries, retaliation would be "deep in the belligerents territory". Thus Khrushchev placed primary emphasis on a posture of minimum deterrence. The Soviets have always been fearful that the United States is using limited conventional wars as a preparation for unleashing a total nuclear war against them. "The theory of local war is a mask designed to conceal the preparations for total war and to justify the use of nuclear weapons in the struggle against the peoples who have unfurled the banner of national liberation".⁷⁶ American strategic experts of the far right have tended to view such Soviet statements to prove that although the Soviets realized that the lack of credibility of massive retaliation made limited war a safer means of enforcing the containment strategy for the US, ideological constraints prevented the Soviets from making public speculation on this point.⁷⁷

75 R.Garthoff, Soviet Strategy in the Missile Age, p.110.

76 N.Talensky, "Military Strategy and Foreign Policy", International Affairs, No.3, March 1958, p.28.

77 Lockwood, The Soviet View of Strategic Doctrine, (New Brunswick, 1983), p.68.

The Soviets have always believed that the US attempts to move away from the doctrine of massive retaliation to limited wars was based on the belief that the change was forced due to the qualitative shift that occurred in favour of the Soviet Union. Though Soviet commentators never delinked the massive retaliation doctrine from the new terminologies like "graduated deterrence", "limited wars" etc., there was no doubt that they perceived the need for newer doctrines because the Soviet nuclear arsenal had become bigger, and hence the American homeland was as vulnerable to Soviet attack as would be the continent of Europe. Hence they tried to channelize, their military-technical" superiority into limited wars. Colonel Kononenko, wrote in the July 1958 issue of International Affairs, "It is not for nothing that American publications of all kinds are paying more attention to the idea" of "limited", "local" and "little" wars, trying even to create the impression that a major world war can be replaced by a series of "littles" wars, thus preventing military operations from touching American soil ... The fear that the capitalist system would collapse as a result of a total nuclear war is the main reason for the interest in "little" wars. Henry Kissinger, the American military writer, writes in his Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, that 'the fear that an all out thermonuclear war might lead to the disintegration of the social structure offers an opportunity to set limits to both war and diplomacy'.⁷⁸

78 Colonel Kononenko, "President US Military Thinking and the Arms Drive", International Affairs, No.7, July 1958, pp.17-18.

The Soviets viewed flexible response whose ultimate goal was to unleash a total nuclear war against the Soviet Union. Flexible response envisions the use of limited nuclear wars as a preparation for unleashing such a war. The first edition of Marshall Sokolovskiy's Military Strategy reflected the Soviet view of flexible response. "They are afraid to take the initiative in unleashing a nuclear war, since this would be disadvantageous from the political standpoint and extremely dangerous from the military standpoint. The whole point of their plans in this regard is to use nuclear weapons in the course of expanding local conflicts, particularly at critical moments; in order to alter the situation (locally) in their favour. They expect to be able to limit the employment of nuclear weapons to their satellites and to defend their own territory, atleast at the beginning of the war, from a crushing nuclear blow. This is the essence of their aggressive plans to initiate a new world war, using local wars and conflicts."⁷⁹ As before with the doctrine of Massive Retaliation, the Soviets again emphasized that it would not be possible for the US to lay down the rules for waging limited nuclear or conventional wars. "Any war, if the imperialists launch it, has a tendency to escalate into an unlimited war".⁸⁰

79 Lockwood, n.77, p.84.

80 Ibid., p.85.

Another theme that the Soviets stressed in the opposition to flexible response was the impossibility to distinguish between military targets and populated areas in the employment of tactical nuclear weapons. They also maintain that the nature of flexible response is essentially no different from that of massive retaliation.

The use of having options in responding to the Soviet threat made the Soviets wary of US designs, particularly in the Third World where both powers were trying to consolidate their gains for spheres of influence. The flexible response doctrine would mean that Soviet threat would be countered through appropriate means depending on the nature of the threat. This war fighting ability in the US doctrine did worry Soviet experts. However, the Soviets plugged their propaganda line that the change in doctrines came about as a result of the changes in the strategic balance in favour of the Soviet Union. By the time the flexible response doctrine came into force the US was far ahead of the Soviets in ICBMs, both megaton and accuracy wise. The Soviets viewed this talk from "a position of strength" as trying to impose upon the Soviet Union restraints.

McNamara's concepts of no-cities, counter-force and launch on warning came in for scathing attack on the grounds that since the US counter-force strikes would not be able to destroy all the Soviet missiles it would be ineffective. Relative superiority would have no meaning as long as both

sides possess an assured capacity for "crushing" retaliation. It can be observed that the Soviet views on nuclear war though being remarkably consistent have changed over a period of time, resulting from improvements in their own technologies and accuracy and their inferiority vis-a-vis the US. An example of this would be the Cuban Missile crisis. The Soviets wanted to emplace IRBMs in Cuba obviously to reduce the time span in threatening the US mainland. It also was a reflection on the sophistication of their ICBMs. That the Soviets withdrew meant that they realized that the American attempts to use nuclear weapons as political leverage had worked.⁸¹

The Schlesinger Doctrine came in for standard Soviet criticism. Apart from earlier arguments, they introduced a new line of thinking that the US was striving to derive unilateral advantages from the limited nuclear options through a lowering of the nuclear threshold. This new argument has to be seen from the results of the decade that had passed. The Soviets in the decade 1964-74 had been able to improve their nuclear arsenals enormously. They viewed SALT-I more as a result of growing Soviet power and the achievement of Soviet parity with the US than as an integral part of the desire on the part of both sides to improve relations. With the introduction of the Schlesinger Doctrine they perceived

81 Lockwood, n.77, p.102.

that the US was trying to upset the rough parity that existed between the two powers and seek unilateral advantages. *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, the Russian language version of International Affairs, wrote in May 1975, "In substantiating the need for the strategy of 'retargeting', the US military theoreticians assert that the US possession of the ability to wage 'limited' nuclear wars intensifies 'deterrent' effect and strengthens international stability. But in reality this theory, which preaches the permissibility of the use of nuclear weapons leads to an erosion of the differences between conventional and nuclear wars and creates an illusion of the legitimacy of a war in which nuclear missile means are used".⁸²

The initial Soviet response to PD 59 was along the lines of their reaction to previous US strategic doctrines: the US was once again trying to break out of the strategic impasse that had been forced upon it by the growth of the Soviet strategic power by devising a "new" strategy which the US believed would bring victory. Major General Slobodenko writing in the January 1981 issue of International Affairs said,

The material base for the elaboration of this strategy is provided by the development and sophistication of diverse new arms systems in the US, with which its government circles hope to achieve military superiority over the Soviet

82 *Ibid.*, p.143.

Union. This once again outlines the extreme danger stemming from the arms race, which is continuously being whipped up by aggressive imperialist forces, since the stockpiling and sophistication of weapons do not increase security but on the contrary as the "new nuclear strategy" demonstrates, increase the threat for all the people throughout the world.(83)

Thus the Soviets believe that limited nuclear war basically is an attempt by the US to break out of the "parity" forced upon it by the Soviet Union. For this, ever since the 1950s they have tried to evolve new strategies to overcome this "catch-up" game by the Soviets. The Soviets have been firmly consistent that the attempt by the US to force its rules of the game for a limited nuclear war on the USSR would be unacceptable. Politically, the Soviets by playing to the sensibilities of the public at large have benefitted the most by sounding the more rational of the two. However, despite the absence of pronouncements on limited war fighting, except for the article by Colonel Rybkin, there is no doubt that the Soviets have made contingency planning for a limited war. The development of tactical nuclear missiles like Scud and Frog are indications that the Soviets do take the US doctrines seriously while planning their strategy. In the last decade they have increasingly talked about limiting wars to spheres. Thus they believe that war can be fought at

83 A.Slobodenko, "The Strategy of Nuclear Adventurism",
International Affairs, January 1981, p.26.

two levels, conventional and the nuclear both mutually exclusive of each other. These, however, are fragmentary gleanings of Soviet operational plans. But they are evidence enough to suggest that though the Soviets call any limited war options as irrational, they have certainly made plans in the event of such war taking place.

The advent of the Reagan Administration has brought in newer dimensions to the whole question of limited war. With the espousal of damage limitation/war survivability and the basic research into defensive weapons and defensive shields, the Soviets are taking limited war seriously enough to have their own research in defensive weapons. But again publicly they are criticizing the Reagan Administration for taking such steps, which threaten to destabilize the existing "parity" between the two powers. The Reagan Administration is trying to engage the Soviet Union in a costly arms race, so that "detente would not subsidize Soviet excesses in their own country". The technological advantage is being used by the Reagan Administration for political purposes and the Soviets seem keen to stop this technological race with public propaganda.

CONCLUSION

In tracing the evolution of the strategic doctrines and in particular the concept of limited nuclear war certain basic impulses that create these doctrines are discernible. Even though the super powers publicly professed aim is to avoid war by preparing for it, it has not resulted in any reduction of tensions. On the contrary, with the continuous build up in military arsenals and the ever present technological and weapons refinement, the thresholds for the outbreak of nuclear war have been reduced dramatically. The concept of limited nuclear war, with its emphasis of fighting one, over a protracted period has led to the sharpening of the conflict between the two super powers. The possibility of first strike has not reduced but increased tensions. The US position to use nuclear weapons to prove Western credibility could turn a potentially contentious area dispute into a limited nuclear war, which rationally cannot stay limited and this escalation would mean the end of life on our planet.

The basic impulses that have led to this frightening exposition of the will to use nuclear weapons on a limited scale are six fold. The first cause to lead to the development of the concept of limited nuclear war in the US has been the "credibility" factor. The US in the early 1950s held absolute superiority in the field of nuclear weapons.

To put this advantage to optimum effect, they used it as threat to stop Communist advancement. Hence in 1954 when John Foster Dulles inaugurated the doctrine of Massive Retaliation, the preponderance of nuclear power was to be used to deter Soviet aggressive designs. But within a few years of the enunciation of the doctrine it came under criticism because such a threat was not conceived as credible enough to deter Soviet advancements in remote areas. The basic reason for this changed line of thinking was the improvement in Soviet nuclear retaliatory capacity. Hence, the primary question to be asked was: would the US allow itself to be destroyed in return for stopping Communist advancement in a remote area? It is with this increased Soviet capability that the proponents of limited nuclear war got their boost. They argued for a "graduated deterrence" so as to make the US threat more credible and capable of responding to the Soviet threat in accordance with its intensity. Through the late 1950 till the mid-1960s the limited war concept held ~~its~~ way, bringing in its wake, various refinements in strategy. With the Kennedy Administration, the Soviet threat was to be met "across the spectrum of possibilities". By this it was thought that US nuclear retaliatory capacity would have far more credibility in resisting Soviet aggression without such a deterrent war escalating into a general war.

2. An early and consistent feature of the US military has been the emphasis on making the armed forces cost effective. This is a typical problem for democracies, where the Government is not only responsible for the nations security but also in equal measure for other developmental and societal projects. The tug of war for allocations is a persistent feature. Born out of this battle, nuclear weapons were thought to be far more cost effective than maintaining a conventional defense of such a size, that would deter the Soviets. When the nuclear stalemate came about by the mid-1950s, there was one section of the academic community that insisted on a strengthening of conventional defense, so that the Soviet threat could be met effectively and the nuclear threshold remain high enough to keep the balance of terror intact. But there was another group of academics in the Pentagon, who looked at nuclear weapons as not only a more potent threat but also cheaper to build and maintain. This problem led to refinements in US strategies and funding of weapons development programmes that gave limited nuclear war concept a further boost. This has been a perennial problem for NATO too. The reluctance of NATO countries to increase their defense spending by 3% in real terms every year has met with stiff opposition from the public and legislatures. Therefore NATO's conventional

threat has to be supplemented by tactical and theatre nuclear weapons.

3. A corollary to the above mentioned point is the nature of threat perceptions that the Soviet Union presented. To gain increased support for military, the Soviet threat is deliberately as imminent, of evil design in trying to capture the "free world" under the guise of Socialism. Such systematic propaganda either by the Government or by its academic supporters leads to Congress sanctioning more funds for military research and weapons procurement. This too, has contributed to the growth of the doctrine of limited nuclear war.

4. Fourthly, the role of the experts in the academic community in the US cannot be underestimated for championing the cause of limited nuclear wars. These experts by providing logically reasoned thinking, try and convince - and they have succeeded - the public opinion and decision makers on the advantages of fighting a limited nuclear war. Since a nuclear war has not been fought, it would be difficult to assess how such "rational" and "controlled" responses, which its advocates argue for, can remain under the control of the decision making body in the event of a nuclear war. Many studies have come up concluding that even the acceptable damage that the limited war advocates accept would be

so horrendous that it is inconveivable that life on earth could ever recover from such a limited attack. Despite these difficulties the proponents like Herman Kahn, Robert Osgood, Colin S. Gray, Richard Burt and Richard Pipes still argue for a limited nuclear war strategy that would be the result of a rational decision, which would help the US overcome the USSR in the final analysis and bring about a change in the enemy government, more in conformity with American interest! For this they are willing to sacrifice 20 million American lives. ! !

5. Technology is the mainspring on which the refinement of strategies takes place. Technology has a self-generating momentum. This momentum increases the temptation to put to use such weapons in the operational doctrine. Technological refinements have led to more accurate weapons, which have more yield, which are having smaller but more powerful engines to carry it to longer distances. Technology has also lowered the threshold of the out-break of nuclear war by making weapons for all kinds of situations. The continuous upgrading of technology on both sides has a destabilizing effect as superiority is transitory leading to more deadly and refined versions in weapons systems. Limited nuclear war is a product of two aspects of technology-the action-reaction syndrome and the self-generating momentum.

6. Finally ideology has played its part in the growth and development of the concept of limited nuclear war. Adversarial relations have always tended to take a darker picture of the enemy's intentions. The enemy has always been ascribed with evil intentions of destroying the country and gain supermacy. However, such perceptions have undergone a qualitative and quantitative change in the nuclear age. In the pre-nuclear age, ideology though important was not the sole determining factor. Nor were the weapons of death capable of so much destruction. The nuclear age has witnessed a confrontation between the "free world" and the "Communist world" as the Americans prefer to put it, or "Socialism" versus "decadent capitalism", as the Soviets refer to it. The ideological content has spilt over into the nuclear weapons race. Thus a justification for developing better and more potent nuclear weapons is to deter and defeat either of the ideologies. This ideological confrontation has helped the doctrine of limited nuclear immensely. The proponents of limited nuclear war have argued that such a concept is in line with the Clausewitzian definition of war and politics. Thus politics cannot be delinked from war. If this has to happen ideology and political state of affairs must influence military doctrine. Thus given the intentions of the opposing forces, a limited nuclear war capability must be made available to win the war and achieve political ends. With the deterioration in super power relations from the mid 1970s,

such an extreme view has come into vogue not only in mainstream American politics but in the successive Administrations. In the last year of Carter's Administration PD 59, a war fighting strategy was evolved and the Reggan Administration has carried it further on the pretext that "a window of vulnerability" exists in American nuclear forces. It has led to building up of America's strategic forces and using technology to drive the arms race in the reverse direction. All this stems from the "extreme" view that the Reagan Administration holds of the Soviet government and its intentions.

These in brief are the motives that have led to the evolution of the concept of limited nuclear war. Any single factor is not solely responsible for its growth. Rather it is the interaction and inter dependence of all these factors that have produced the concept of limited nuclear war.

The concept of limited nuclear war, despite all its logical premises suffers from a number of failings that in the event of an unleashing of nuclear war, it would not remain limited. The first question is can such wars be sufficiently contained to produce specific effects and reduce other effects substansially? The fact of the matter is that the most impressive characteristic of all the scientific studies of the impact of nuclear war cannot accurately assess the extent of the damage in case a limited nuclear war is unleashed. The

Office of Technology Assessment of the US Congress in its reports "The Effects of Nuclear War" said, "

the effects of a nuclear war that cannot be calculated are atleast as important as those for which calculations are attempted."(1)

It also said that the impact of "small" or "limited" nuclear attack would be "enormous". This report was the most comprehensive study made in the US which took into account the range and magnitude of attack in various cases from single cities to counterforce targets and political and economic targets. The number of deaths varied from 200,000 to 160,000,000. This fact alone bears testimony to the upredictability of the effects of a nuclear war.

The forms of limitation, as proposed by the advocates of limited nuclear war, would become irrelevant in contemporary warfare. Codes of military etiquette and chivalry which depend for their sustenance upon cosmopolitan norms, perceived mutuality coordination with the enemy swould be inapplicable in present day conditions.² Examples of American conduct in a limited nuclear war such as put forward by Morton Halperin wrote,...

1 Office of Technology Assessment, US Congress, The Effects of Nuclear War, (Washington 1979), p.3.

2 Ian Clark, Limited Nuclear War, (London 1982), p.224.

limiting a central war may depend on both sides believing that limitation is possible and that the other is likely to reciprocate restraint. The US should continue to emphasize that the changes it is making in its strategic posture are relevant to the limitation of centralwar....

The US might also spell out even more explicitly its commitment to particular kinds of limitations by stating more clearly than was done in the McNamara speech that we would not target cities unless the Soviets do so, and we might privately suggest to the Soviets that they separate these two types of targets so that city destruction would not become necessary."³ Such an action would require reciprocity from the Soviets. But the Soviets have stated consistently that they would not play by Western rules of the war and that they do not believe that war once it crosses the nuclear threshold could remain limited. The other reason as to why the Soviets would not accept limited war are, that may be in their calculation the political and technological difficulties are simply insurmountable. Also as Soviet ideologi insists that the wars actually fought by the Soviet Union are necessary and therefore just wars. With such under pinnings of moral and ideological fervour, the rationale for restricting the military effort must inevitably be obscured. Another reason put forward by Bracken is that:

By intentionally operating some of its forces near the West German urban zones, the Warsaw

3 Morton Halperin, Limited War in the Nuclear Age, (New York, 1963), p. 107.

Pact would be manipulating the threat of massive collateral damage.... In fact, a Pact use of suburban hugging tactics would exploit NATO's attempt to engage in a controlled battlefield nuclear war, for if nuclear weapons were used in this scenario, NATO would be forced to fire on its own cities and population. (4)

Another argument against limited nuclear war is what Paul Warnke, former Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency said in the New York Times, "deterrence is always weakened by any strategy that seems to contemplate a limited nuclear war".⁵ The editorial comment of The Times (London) while criticizing PD 59 said that "the most familiar one is that by making the US nuclear force easier to use it makes it more likely to be used."⁶ Thus it becomes obvious that with greater precision in weapons systems, selective nuclear options are designed to reduce the risk of war by increasing the threat of it. Whether this is possible as part of a deterrence theory is not questionable but impossible.

Selectivity in targeting was supposed to be introduced by the new doctrines in order to reduce the damage to

4 P.Bracken, "Collateral damage and Theatre Warfare", Survival, September-October 1980, p.205, quoted in Ian Clark, n.2, pp.221-222.

5 Paul Warnke, New York Times, August 17, 1980.

6 The Times, September 4, 1980.

civilian centres. However, Schlesinger clearly refuted this point when he said, "The shift in targeting policy ... does not mean that we are pointing missiles away from cities to military targets... we must continue to target cities."⁷ This indicates not the abandonment of MAD, but its displacement in time. It is to postpone MAD and reinstate it as the orthodoxy of a war-time rather than of a peace time strategy.

The momentum of technological developments and brute acquisition of weapons systems is another problem in limiting nuclear war. With MIRV ed technology, acquisition of theatre nuclear devices and more availability of nuclear warheads targeting policy has been affected. As G.Treverton wrote, "with more and more nuclear weapons, the US reached a point in 1974 where even the all out "assured destruction" retaliation would have sent some 70% of the warheads against military not civilian or economic targets."⁸ Another aspect of technology momentum was brought out by Robert Ellsworth. While discussing the Schlesinger doctrines, Ellsworth wrote, "it is not a "new Nixon strategy" which requires enormous numbers of new, highly accurate warheads. The contrary is the case: it is the enormous numbers of new highly accurate warheads which require a new strategy."⁹

7 J.Schlesinger, quoted in Ian Clark, n.2, p.226.

8 G.Treverton, quoted in Ian Clark, n.2, p.227.

9 Richard Ellsworth, Letter to New York Times, January 25, 1974.

Despite personal scepticism, the officials in the US government are not able to control the drive of new weapons from gaining entry into US force structures. An example of this is the statement of Defense Secretary Harold Brown, who earlier had defended PD 59 and the concept of limited nuclear war. But now in an interview to ABC, he said, "nuclear strikes, a nuclear strike on the US, even though we retaliated initially in a limited way, would probably escalate ultimately to an allout nuclear war."¹⁰

There has also been a fundamental shift from the Schlesinger doctrine to the PD 59. While the Schlesinger doctrine was offered as a new look in US strategic policy even though it contained the limited counter-force options of American strategic practice, the PD 59 on the other hand, was envisaged as "not a new strategic doctrine - it is not a radical departure from US strategic policy over the past decade or so". But in essence it made a fundamental change in the targeting policy - that of targeting the enemy's political and military control centres. This targeting policy itself takes the wind out of the argument that in a limited nuclear war, control must be maintained by both sides so as to avoid escalation. With the PD 59 targeting policy the destruction of USSR political and military

10 Official Text, US Embassy, New Delhi, August 20, 1980.

control and command centres would lead not to a control of the nuclear war but an escalation of it ^{into a} general war.

Another problem in the event of a limited nuclear war starting is how to end it? PD 59 nor its following policies offer any enlightenment on this subject. As Harold Brown maintained in the ABC interview, "in our planning we have not ignored the problem of ending the war, nor can we ignore it in the event of the war".¹¹ Yet the entire PD 59 does not elaborate how such a war could be terminated.

Mercifully despite the plethora of theories that have come about on limited nuclear war, no war has been started. Hiroshima and Nagasaki are our totality of nuclear experience. Any war in the future would bring upon us catastrophic events yet unseen. The stakes are high and the dangers manifold. We would have done our task no better than to avert such an event. The nuclear bomb is a fact and we have to live with it. Limited nuclear war is a theory and it should remain that way.

11 Ibid.

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