CINCINNATUS *RECIDIVUS*:

A REVIEW ESSAY

by

JOHN R. GALVIN

Review of Self Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam Era. *By Cincinnatus. 288 pages. W. W. Norton, New York. $15.95.*

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The American decade of fighting in Vietnam has now slipped into history, thus becoming part of the verities and myths of the chronicled past as shaped and molded by the pens of those who would recapture the reality of a bygone era. With some exceptions, the creation of a historical view is a collective thing; the picture that emerges is a product of the various chronicles. This new book reinforces some of the facts and some of the fiction, shows some insights, takes some cheap shots, and calls for a more objective look at the war by military men.

Writing under the pseudonym "Cincinnatus," the author tells us that American military men have not taken a good, objective look at the Vietnam War and as a result have learned very little from it. He says they tend to blame others, especially the politicians, for the lack of tactical success, and in doing so blind themselves to the lessons of the war. He is also concerned with a related point: much was wrong with the tactics, policies, and programs, he writes, but the officers who had to carry them out elected, for reasons associated with career enhancement, to say nothing about that; Vietnam was a mess, but you would never know it from the accounts of the senior officers who were there. It was only later, he says, under the shield of anonymity afforded them by the questionnaires analyzed in Douglas Kinnard's book, *The War Managers*, that they were willing to express criticism of the conduct of the war. He asks the same question several times:

> Why are the Senior Officer Debriefing Reports devoid of criticism of army tactics and doctrines, save for a few very carefully guarded remarks? Where, when it was needed, was the moral courage of those dedicated warriors who had reached the apex of their careers, built upon the qualities of "duty, honor, country"? Where was the much-vaunted "professionalism" of these men?

It is an interesting irony that the author writes this book under the protective cloak of a pseudonym.

Having generalized over the tactical and doctrinal errors of the war, Cincinnatus turns to a lengthy and detailed catalogue of the ills that characterize, in his mind, the conduct of the fighting. We fought the wrong war, he says—they were guerrillas and we were fighting Fulda Gap-style. We had the wrong organization, the wrong tactics. We conducted search-and-destroy operations and made no effort to control terrain. We had careerism and ticket-punching and rear area luxuries. We counted bodies and lied about the totals. We had too many noncombatant troops; we used drugs, had fraggings, had

race problems, had My Lai. We didn't understand the infrastructure, didn't study the French experience, didn't trust each other. We gave too many awards, kept the tour length too short, made the operations too large. We lacked ability, lacked foresight, and lacked the guts to straighten out all of the above.

And of course much more. The book is an example of a well known sub-genre within the cascade of publications on the Vietnam War. This sub-genre is characterized generally by emotional, subjective, and simplistic aggregations of all criticisms, big and small, from previous books. Cincinnatus thus reproduces variations on a consistent theme, essentially destructive, of the ineffectuality and malfeasance of American military leadership in the war. Even the young soldier out in the jungle becomes a part of the relentless critique. The GI was "mediocre at best," untrained, beset by racial problems and drugs, "very often an ineffective fighting man who felt he might be sacrificed in a cause he neither understood nor sympathized with."

Of the assorted truths, half-truths, and myths, the myths are most prominent. Following earlier writers Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage (*Crisis in Command*, 1978), for example, Cincinnatus claims that officers in Vietnam "did not die in sufficient numbers or in the presence of their men often enough" to show that they were serious about what they were doing. In actuality, the death rate of officers seems sufficient to satisfy even the most avid body-counter. Compare:

OFFICERS KILLED IN ACTION
(Percent of total deaths in action)

World War I	**4%**
World War II	**15%**
Korea	**5%**
Vietnam	**11%**

The author's characterization of General William C. Westmoreland helps to feed a growing myth that he "worked out the basics of the American approach" with three types of operations—search-and-destroy, clearing, and securing—and then stubbornly refused to do anything but fight the big war. The portrait of a hidebound Westmoreland, fixed on a high-intensity war, impervious to suggestion, unaware of the realities around him, comes close to being the opposite of the man, his way of thinking, and his day-to-day approach to the war. As a matter of fact, Westmoreland was more open, more approachable, and more willing to change than most generals. Indeed, he was willing to consider the concoctions of "expert" after "expert." But he found no war-winning solutions, and in the deepening retrospect, no one (certainly not Cincinnatus) has come forward to show with any authority just what it was that General Westmoreland should have done, given the state of Vietnam in the years following 1963.

Concentrate on control of terrain? The author cites a US Marine approach called CAP (Combined Action Platoons). This, he says, was shunned by the Army although it enjoyed "obvious successes." CAP was a courageous, well-planned, admirable effort, and it did have successes, but it was a single part of a larger whole, which included fighting off the 17 NVA divisions that were committed to stop programs such as CAP and other localized pacification efforts. By itself, CAP would have been another enclave strategy.

In writing this book, Cincinnatus did not, like his namesake, put his plough aside and take up the sword for his country; instead he continued behind the plough, plodding the same furrows—the same truths, half-truths, and myths that had been ploughed so often before—and he turned up very little that is new. But he does have a message for us, one that should get our ear: he tells us, over and over, that we have not made any kind of solid, objective study of this complex war. And if he helps to turn us toward an exhaustive and accurate analysis of our experience in Vietnam—in the light of the need to better prepare ourselves for the maze-like complexities of low-intensity warfare—then he deserves due credit.

Vietnam was the longest and most extensive of the low-intensity wars spawned in the wake of World War II. With all its many wars within wars, like Chinese boxes, Vietnam may be prototypical of what the future holds for us. The prototype may lie in the war's grouped characteristics which taken one by one are not new, but taken together presage the low-intensity "military environments" we will someday face. For, considered in its totality, Vietnam was something new. It was beyond the experience of Malaya or the Philippines, which is why Robert G. K. Thompson (*Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, 1966) and others did not have the answers; why Dr. Eugene Staley's advice (*Self Destruction*, pp. 207-08) and even Colonel Nguyen Be's (pp. 205, 212-16) were not enough. This complexity is also the reason that no coherent tactical criticism has struggled out of the avalanche of books on the war. Thus, while Vietnam was of low intensity, tonnages of ammo notwithstanding, the lessons have worldwide applicability.

They are applicable even to Europe. Those officers who turn over in their military minds the gothic scenarios of the clash of modern fighting machines on the plains and in the corridors of the Old World should recognize that low-intensity and high-intensity wars can coexist. Battle in Western (or Eastern) Europe or the Middle East, if it comes, would take place on more than one level. The history of the last two centuries shows a trend toward all-out involvement of a nation at war; the "people's war" doctrine of Giap involves multilevel combat and the totality of national resources. If not the watershed of change in low-intensity warfighting, Vietnam is certainly an event we must reconsider with objectivity and care.

Soldiers are not the only ones who have an interest in the Vietnam War as a low-intensity battlefield. The American public has shown a voracious appetite that publishers and moviemakers increasingly feed, in one way or another. Unfortunately, much of what has been ground out in the absence of anything definitive on the military side tends to propagate the growing folklore. There are several works in progress, let us hope not of the genre of *Self Destruction. US News and World Report* has a four-volume Vietnam history in the making; a Boston company reports that it has in progress a 14-volume work on the war; an upcoming television series will show about 15 programs on the conflict. The news media are well aware of the demand for information on the war. Given this continuing market, the flood of quasi-analytical commentary goes on because it fills a vacuum. There has been no official military analysis of the conflict. Cincinnatus makes a telling point when he insists, throughout the book, that the American military must stop blaming politicians for inhibiting tactical success in the war and must instead study carefully the tactical lessons that are there to be learned.

In the late Forties, when the dust of World War II still lingered in the air, the Army's Office of Military History found a way to assemble a staff of 210 writers to begin the official history of the war. The people who gathered in the old "temporary" buildings were historians, professors like Hugh Cole of the University of Chicago, men whose names would be remembered—Louis Morton, Maurice Matloff, Stetson Conn, Ray Cline, Robert Coakley, Mark Watson, Charles MacDonald—historians and writers all. The result is well known: the green books,

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the 74 volumes, laid out the Army's wartime history in all its glories, but with all its warts. After Korea the story was the same—a series of volumes that pulled no punches, telling the story of that bitter fight.

A comparison with today's organization of the same office, now renamed the US Army Center for Military History ("Center" instead of "Office," seeming to imply a greater role than before) is enlightening. There are about 100 people working at the center, and of these only 10 are engaged in an effort to produce some 23 volumes on the Vietnam War. Three volumes reportedly are "nearing completion." The program appears to be on a back burner.

What might be the reason? The politico-military atmosphere of the late Forties certainly was not any more or less supportive of a history series than the environment of today. There were inhibitors then as now. The historians knew there would have to be some boat-rocking. Any history would have to explain, for example, the reasons for going into North Africa and Italy rather than into France; someone would have to analyze the priorities that left the Pacific campaign with little support; the Hiroshima-Nagasaki decisions would get scrutiny. It could have been argued that most of the prime actors—both military and political—were still around, with many at the peak of their careers. These obstacles, however, had little weight when balanced against the need to tell the story, learn the lessons, and provide a basis for future doctrine. The green book series answered this need with accuracy and grace, and is known and respected worldwide as an expert, honest, objective, definitive work.

It is perhaps passé to consider a historical series that involves only the Army. It might make more sense to produce a history of the United States Armed Forces in Vietnam, sponsored by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Definitely, the only way to insure quality comparable to the histories of World War II is to go about it the same way—to give a top-ranking historian the leeway to build his own team and the independence to write what he deems to be the truth. A front-burner effort on the Vietnam histories would cost money and time and people. Is it worth doing?

Yes and no. It is not worth undertaking if we are merely looking for ways to counter the Cincinnatus genre, which is a result and symbol of our inactivity. The real need for an exhaustive military analysis of the war is to help us learn how to respond to low-intensity military operations that conceivably may surge into existence in the future. We lack an answer to the question, *What was Vietnam, in its essence, as an American military experience*? Even if we wanted to, we could not turn away from the answer to that question.

Cincinnatus says the US Army must learn "how it was possible for unkempt, ragged jungle fighters headed by dedicated leaders to bring it to its knees." No one brought the American Army to its knees in Vietnam. There is much we can learn from the war, but to do so we need precision, clear judgment, incisiveness, and objectivity in our historical analyses (qualities Cincinnatus does not always provide). There is a point here, essential to any analysis of that war: as Ardant du Picq told us a century ago, you cannot hold a country militarily if you cannot control it politically. In the case of Vietnam, the patient was dying when the doctor arrived, and all the various life support systems could never be enough. That is not an excuse; it is rather a fundamental reality that colored all US Armed Forces actions in Vietnam. It is the one simple lesson that prefaces all other lessons. That is why no armchair quarterback has found any magic answers. The US Armed Forces supported the various regimes in Vietnam, employing every means known in the tactical book—and we could have continued to do so (at a cost) indefinitely. But the collective American leadership, in those last days, concluded that there were no life signs that would make a continued effort worth the cost. And the Army was withdrawn. On its feet.

PRESIDENTIAL DIRECTIVE 59:

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

by

LOUIS RENÉ BERES

Since the dawn of the Atomic Age, the overriding objective of American strategic forces has been to deter nuclear war. Over the years, however, the policies designed to implement that objective have changed considerably. Today there is cause for concern that current strategic nuclear policy as embodied in Presidential Directive 59 may in fact be counterproductive to this country's security, and that such policy may even hasten the arrival of nuclear war. Reflecting such concern, this article will examine the essential elements, assumptions, and historical roots of the recently announced policy with a view to assessing whether our security has been enhanced or degraded.

DISQUIETING BACKGROUND OF THE 'NEW' POLICY

While PD 59 codifies the latest refinements in American strategic planning, its essential emphasis on counterforce targeting is hardly new.[1] Signed by former President Carter on 25 July 1980, clarified by former Secretary of Defense Brown in a speech at the Naval War College on 20 August 1980, and indorsed in principle by President Reagan during his campaign, this policy evolved from a war plan known as National Security Decision Memorandum 242, formulated in the closing months of the Nixon Administration. PD 59 visualizes a counterforce targeting policy, along with the forces and weapons necessary to give the policy effect, allowing the president to order discrete nuclear attacks against the enemy's missile silos, military bases, military forces, and command and control centers as alternatives to massive city-busting attacks. By providing him this flexibility, it is argued, he can, if war deterrence fails, conduct nuclear warfighting below the all-out threshold, thus avoiding the Hobson's choice of capitulation or Armageddon. In his Naval War College speech, Secretary Brown took pains to stress the essential historical continuity of PD 59:

> The US has never had a doctrine based simply and solely on reflexive, massive attacks on Soviet cities. Instead, we have always planned both more selectively (options limiting urban-industrial damage) and more comprehensively (a range of military targets). Previous Administrations, going back well into the 1960's, recognized the inadequacy of a strategic doctrine that would give us too narrow a range of options.[2]

Such a policy, it will be seen, represents the latest retreat from the doctrine of "massive retaliation" first promulgated by John Foster Dulles in January 1954. This doctrine, it will be recalled, expressed America's intention to base its security "primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate instantly by means and at places of our own choosing. . . . [thereby gaining] more security at less cost."[3]

Of course, the logical fallacies of the doctrine of massive retaliation became glaringly apparent as the Soviets developed

their own retaliatory capacity, and a number of informed critics began the search for a more credible strategy of nuclear deterrence, one that would preserve a broader array of retaliatory options. Since an alternative strategy was founded on the notion of a spectrum of deterrence, these critics soon advanced tentative formulations of the idea of "limited nuclear war." Ultimately, many of these formulations found their way into the policies of the "McNamara Strategy" of the 1960's and the successor strategies of James Schlesinger, Donald Rumsfeld, and Harold Brown.

A full 18 years before the announcement of PD 59, Secretary McNamara, in a speech at the University of Michigan, proposed a strategy going beyond the requirements of assured destruction, one that included both counterforce and countervalue retaliatory options. Then as now, the argument was advanced that credible nuclear deterrence mandates a strategy that allows for intermediate levels of military response, including a second-strike counterforce strategy. Many elements of this strategy had been articulated several years earlier, in 1957, by Henry Kissinger. Confronting what he called "the basic challenge to United States strategy," Kissinger wrote:

> We cannot base all our plans on the assumption that war, if it comes, will inevitably be all-out. We must strive for a strategic doctrine which gives our diplomacy the greatest freedom of action and which addresses itself to the question of whether the nuclear age presents only risks or whether it does not also offer opportunities.[4]

The precise nature of Kissinger's preferred "strategic doctrine" here is preparation for limited nuclear war. While recognizing that the arguments against limited nuclear war are "persuasive," he insisted—in what must now be seen as the precursor of current strategic assumptions—that nuclear war need not be apocalyptic. Consequently, said the future Secretary of State, "Limited nuclear war represents our most effective strategy against nuclear powers or against a major power which is capable of substituting manpower for technology."[5]

These ideas of a limited nuclear war—of a strategy of controlled nuclear warfighting—were also widely accepted by James Schlesinger during his tenure as Secretary of Defense. On 4 March 1974, Schlesinger testified before Congress in support of an American capability of reacting to a limited nuclear attack with selected counterforce strikes. According to his testimony, such strikes could greatly reduce the chances for escalation into all-out strategic exchanges, thereby producing fewer civilian casualties.

In his 1974 Annual Report as Secretary of Defense, Schlesinger remarked that nuclear attacks solely against American military installations might result in "relatively few civilian casualties." Subsequently, on 11 September, the Subcommittee on Arms Control of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations met with Schlesinger in executive session to consider the probable consequences of nuclear attacks against military installations in this country. During what transpired, the Secretary took a remarkably sanguine view, claiming that as few as 800,000 casualties could result from an attack on US ICBM silos. This view assumed (1) a Soviet attack on all American Minuteman and Titan ICBMs, with a one-megaton

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warhead targeted on each silo, and (2) extensive civil defense protection.

Since Schlesinger's conclusions generated a good deal of skepticism among several senators, the Office of Technology Assessment of the Congress was asked to evaluate the Department of Defense calculations. In response to the invitation, this office convened an ad hoc panel of experts, chaired by Dr. Jerome Wiesner, which returned with the following summary of conclusions:

> The panel members examined the results of the analyses of nuclear attacks which were given the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by the Department of Defense, and the assumptions which went into these analyses, in some detail. They concluded that the casualties calculated were substantially too low for the attacks in question as a result of a lack of attention to intermediate and long-term effects. They also concluded that the studies did not adequately reflect the large uncertainties inherent in any attempt to determine the civilian damage which might result from a nuclear attack.[6]

Even more significantly, perhaps, the panel could not determine from DOD testimony any consistent set of hypothetical Soviet objectives in the assumed nuclear strikes. While the panel acknowledged that the Soviets could detonate a small number of nuclear weapons over isolated areas in the United States without producing significant civilian damage, it could not understand how they might possibly benefit from such an attack. The panel's assessment, therefore, was explicitly detached from any presumption that its members felt the analyzed scenarios to be sensible or realistic.

Indeed, the panel insisted that any analysis of proposed changes in American target strategy be conducted within a larger set of considerations affecting policy in this area. Such considerations, it felt, must include the extent to which new strategies could be executed without escalation to general nuclear war; the degree to which such policy increases or decreases our reliance on nuclear weapons; the extent to which it raises or lowers the threshold of nuclear first use; and the effect on our allies' perceptions of the credibility of the American commitment to their security. The panel recommended, therefore, "that the Foreign Relations Committee ask for the additional analysis of casualties outlined in the following section only if it intends to engage in a discussion of these other issues."[7]

Ultimately, DOD completed new calculations which showed that under certain conditions an attack upon US ICBM silos could result in casualties of between 3 and 22 million, as opposed to the 800,000 to 6.7 million previously cited by Schlesinger.[8] Regrettably, however, the discussion of "other issues" called for by the panel has yet to take place. As in the case of its doctrinal antecedents, current US strategic policy is premised on the assumption that the Soviets might view a limited nuclear attack against the United States as rational.

Even if such attacks might hold out the promise of *relatively* low casualty levels, there is little reason to believe that anything short of an all-out nuclear assault would make military sense to the Soviets. According to Dr. Sidney Drell's testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Arms Control, in order to carry out a militarily effective attack against America's 1054 ICBMs, one that would destroy about 800 of them, or 80 percent, the Soviets would have to unleash an attack which would engender approximately 18.3 million American fatalities. Thus, the attack would hardly be "limited" as far as the American population is concerned. But even so extensive a counterforce assault would not be militarily disabling, not entirely, since the remaining American ICBMs would still constitute a "healthy, robust retaliatory force."[9]

What has been developing over a period of many years in American strategic planning circles, therefore, is a counterforce doctrine that both understates the effects of so-called limited nuclear war and ignores the primary fact that such a war makes no military sense. There is, in fact, no clear picture of what the Soviet Union might hope to gain from the kinds of limited counterforce attacks that

determine the direction of current American strategic policy. Indeed, everything we know about Soviet military strategy indicates that it fails to entertain the notion of limited nuclear war. If we can believe what the Soviets say, all nuclear conflict would necessarily be total.[10]

Once the nuclear firebreak has been crossed, it is most unlikely that conflict could remain limited. Ironically, this point was hinted at by Henry Kissinger in 1965: "No one knows how governments or people will react to a nuclear explosion under conditions where both sides possess vast arsenals."[11] And it was understood by Robert McNamara, who claimed that once even tactical nuclear weapons were employed, "You can't keep them limited; you'll destroy everything."[12] While the prudent course would appear to assume that any nuclear exchange must be avoided lest it become total, current American strategic policy underscores counterforce targeting and its corollary recognition of limited nuclear warfighting. Although it is clear that once a nuclear exchange begins it will become impossible to verify yields, sizes, numbers, and types of nuclear weapons employed,[13] current policy reaffirms the notion of limited exchanges conducted in deliberate, measured, controlled fashion.

RATIONALE OF CURRENT STRATEGIC NUCLEAR POLICY

The essential rationale of the recently announced strategic nuclear policy is that it strengthens deterrence. Faced with the relentless buildup and refinement of Soviet strategic forces, and with a Soviet strategic doctrine that emphasizes nuclear warfighting, American planners are no longer comfortable with the doctrine of mutual assured destruction. Rather than being forced to choose between all-out nuclear reprisal, on the one hand, and capitulation, on the other, the United States, it is argued, requires a set of intermediate retaliatory options that include particularly the capability to strike at the Soviet military apparatus itself. Only with such options, we are told, can this country maintain the elements of a credible deterrent posture. In the words of Secretary Brown:

> Deterrence remains, as it has been historically, our fundamental strategic objective. But deterrence must restrain a far wider range of threats than just massive attacks on US cities. We seek to deter any adversary from any course of action that could lead to general nuclear war. Our strategic forces must also deter nuclear attacks on smaller sets of targets in the US or on US military forces, and be a wall against nuclear coercion of, or attack on, our friends and allies. And strategic forces, in conjunction with theater nuclear forces, must contribute to deterrence of conventional aggression as well. . . . In our analysis and planning, we are necessarily giving greater attention to how a nuclear war would actually be fought by both sides if deterrence fails. There is no contradiction between this focus on how a war would be fought and what its results would be, *and* our purpose of insuring continued peace through mutual deterrence. Indeed, this focus helps us achieve deterrence and peace, by ensuring that our ability to retaliate is fully credible.[14]

In essence, this posture, which is the outcome of a fundamental review of American targeting policy ordered by President Carter in the summer of 1977, stresses the capacity to employ strategic nuclear forces "selectively." Anticipating the prospect of intermediate levels of Soviet aggression, it moves to impress Soviet leaders that the United States has both the will and the means to make such aggression more costly than gainful. It does this by implementing a policy of graduated strategic response calculated to make Soviet leaders more cautious. "This is," says Lieutenant General Edward Rowny (USA, Ret.), who for six years represented the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the SALT II negotiations, "a more realistic and effective way to deter the Soviet Union, which has been inexorably building its military capabilities for the last 15 years."[15] Secretary of Defense Brown, faced with what he saw as a need for deterring Soviet attacks

of "less than all-out scale," proposed options to attack Soviet military and political targets while holding back a significant reserve. Such a strategy, he argued, could preclude a stark and intolerable choice between no effective military response and spasm nuclear war. Instead, we could attack "in a selective and measured way a range of military, industrial, and political control targets, while retaining an assured destruction capacity in reserve."[16]

At first glance, such a strategy may appear eminently reasonable. After all, doesn't the prudential path to safety lie in leaving open the possibility of ending a strategic exchange before the worst escalation and damage have occurred? Mustn't it be a cornerstone of American strategic policy to inflict costs on a Soviet adversary equal to or higher than the value the Soviets might expect to gain from partial attacks on the United States or its allies? Doesn't the policy of flexibly calibrating US retaliation to the particular provocation further the overall objective of strategic deterrence?

Regrettably, the answer to each of the foregoing questions is NO, and the strategy of nuclear deterrence at issue is not as promising as it may first appear. Indeed, careful examination of its underlying principles will reveal that it contributes to, rather than constrains, the prospect of nuclear war. This is the case because it is founded upon an incomplete, erroneous, and sometimes contradictory set of assumptions, and upon a serious misunderstanding of vital interactive effects.

PROBLEMATIC ASSUMPTIONS AND OVERLOOKED EFFECTS

Current strategic nuclear policy rests on the assumption that the Soviets might have something to gain by launching a limited first-strike attack on the United States or its allies. Yet, as we have already noted, this assumption overlooks the possibility that the Soviets may not share our view of controlled nuclear conflict and that they are apt to doubt our declared commitment to proportionate retaliation. Faced with grave uncertainty about the nature of an American strategic response, Soviet leaders considering the costs and benefits of striking first would likely have serious reservations about settling rationally for strategic self-limitation.

The current strategic nuclear policy also appears to be founded on the assumption that the Soviets are more likely to be deterred by the threat of limited American counterforce reprisals than by the threat of overwhelming, total retaliation. What this notion overlooks, however, is the oft-declared Soviet unwillingness to play by American rules. Since the Soviet Union continues to threaten the United States with all-out nuclear war once the nuclear firebreak is crossed, the credibility of the American commitment to selective counterforce strikes must be dubious. Once again, the differing viewpoints on limited nuclear war held by the superpowers impair the reasonableness of America's deterrent strategy.

The American strategy is undermined further by this country's own published doubts concerning controlled nuclear conflict. In the words of Secretary Brown:

> In adopting and implementing this policy, we have no more illusions than our predecessors that a nuclear war could be closely and surgically controlled. There are, of course, great uncertainties about what would happen if nuclear weapons were ever again used. These uncertainties, combined with the catastrophic results sure to follow from a maximum escalation of the exchange, are an essential element of deterrence.[17]

I believe he is mistaken. Rather than functioning as "an essential element of deterrence," the uncertainties to which he refers may seriously weaken the credibility of an American threat to employ a measured strategy of annihilation. And the effect of our uncertainties is made all the more worrisome by virtue of their open expression. After all, Soviet perceptions of American strategic doubts can only reinforce their rejection of graduated nuclear conflict.

Also troubling is the thought that the new strategy of deterrence is based upon a confusion of the requirement for survivable

nuclear forces with the dividends of counterforce targeting doctrine. These are discrete, logically unrelated concepts. While it is clear that a survivable and enduring strategic retaliatory capability is essential to stable deterrence, a provocative targeting doctrine is not only unessential, it is counterproductive. Perhaps the greatest confusion of the two issues can be seen in the debate concerning the deployment of the mobile, land-based MX missile. As currently conceived, the MX is designed not only with a view to maintaining the survivability of the ICBM leg of the Triad, but also with a corresponding concern for a high single-shot kill probability against hard pinpoint targets (silos, submarine pens, nuclear storage sites, and command bunkers).

Of course, the Department of Defense and other supporters of the MX argue that there can be no reason for making such Soviet targets safe from US ICBMs when comparable targets in this country are at risk from the increasingly accurate Soviet ICBMs. Colin S. Gray, for example, says:

> From the Western side, PD 59 has attracted the now-traditional charges of instability promotion. (Somehow, it is acceptable for the USSR to threaten . . . US strategic forces and the survivability of the US national chain of command [after all, that is just 'the Soviet way']—but not for the United States to reciprocate!)[18]

But such insistence upon tit-for-tat contributes to a protracted arms race that is inherently unstable. While the apparent Soviet drive to acquire a pinpoint first-strike capability against American land-based missiles must be countered by steps to ensure the continuation of our Mutual Assured Destruction capacity, it does not follow that this country must also prepare to fight a so-called limited nuclear war. Contrary to the central thesis of PD 59, the United States is not obliged to match Moscow's moves in order to preserve deterrence. Indeed, Mr. Carter's initial wariness over counterforce doctrine was well-founded. The enlargement of selective strategic options for attacking the Soviet Union does nothing to enhance the credibility of the American deterrent, but it does enhance the Soviet inclination to preempt against the United States, and here is where the real danger lies.

In fact, the Soviets have been most explicit in characterizing the codified shift in American nuclear targeting policy as a move toward a first-strike capability. During August 1980, commentators for Tass, the Soviet press agency, and the Communist Party newspaper *Pravda* contended on several occasions that the new declarations on American strategy were linked with Washington's intentions to deploy advanced medium-range missiles in Western Europe. The link, they alleged, is based on a plan to confine Soviet retaliation to Western Europe, the anticipated launching site for the American first strike. As reported by Vladimir Goncharov, a political news analyst for Tass, there could be no doubt that this indeed was the American intention.[19]

In assessing the Soviet charges, one cannot ignore the suspicion that a retaliatory counterforce strategy is somewhat a contradiction in terms. After all, this suspicion lies at the heart of American skepticism concerning Soviet claims that their own counterforce targeting is for retaliatory purposes only. Unless the nation that strikes first were to do so on a limited basis, holding considerable follow-on nuclear strategic weapons in reserve, a counterforce capability would be useful only to the nation that strikes first. Otherwise, a counterforce attack would fall on empty missile silos. As we have already seen, however, from the Soviet view a limited nuclear first strike would be illogical. And while it is conceivable that in certain contingencies the United States might consider a limited nuclear first strike, such an act would entail a substantial risk of nuclear retaliation and subsequent escalation. In this connection, we might profitably consider the recent reply of Lieutenant General Mikhail A. Milshtein, a Soviet authority on military doctrine, when asked by a *New York Times* interviewer whether he considered it possible for the United States to deliver pinpoint strikes at Soviet military targets with only

limited effect on the civilian population. General Milshtein answered:

> Absolute fantasy. There will be plenty of what those exponents of 'limited' nuclear war call 'collateral casualties.' The missile silos, the airfields, the naval bases are not located in space. There are people around.[20]

The unsuitability of counterforce doctrines of retaliation is reinforced by serious technological difficulties. In a letter written in April 1979 to Defense Secretary Brown, General Richard H. Ellis, Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Air Command, indicated that United States strategic nuclear forces were incapable of carrying out a selective counterforce targeting strategy and would not be in a position to do so until 1986. As reported recently by Drew Middleton, little has happened in 18 months to change General Ellis's estimate. According to Middleton:

> Surveying the Strategic Air Command's prospects of launching a [counterforce] attack after an initial Soviet strike, [General Ellis] estimated that the B-52s and ICBMs in his force would be left with fewer than 1500 warheads. He conceded that the American fleet of ballistic missile submarines would probably escape crippling damage during a surprise attack. But he stressed that there would not be sufficient surviving forces to launch an effective operation against Soviet missile silos and to fulfill other tasks 'at a level much above the assured destruction of Soviet urban/industrial targets.'[21]

And what is the intention of this country's plan to place Soviet civilian and military leaders at hostage, as is implicit in PD 59's provisions for targeting Soviet military command posts and governmental control centers? Clearly, the essential rationale of limited, controlled nuclear conflict requires the *preservation* of leaders once a war has begun. To base a nuclear strategy on destroying the adversary's ruling elite at the outset is to heighten the probability of loss of rational control of nuclear war. Ironically, an understanding of this point is embedded in Presidential Directive 58 (complementing PD 59), which orders more effective procedures for protecting American leaders in the event of nuclear war. While it is assumed that Soviet leaders are less likely to strike first if they know that they are personally targeted, this assumption is at variance with General Ellis's assessment of our retaliatory potential. It follows that Soviet leaders may actually feel *less jeopardized* by striking first and that they may be tempted to do so before 1986 or whenever the United States acquires the advanced weapon systems to fully implement a counterforce strategy.

Taken together, the elements of America's counterforce nuclear strategy provide genuine incentives to Soviet leaders to strike first. These incentives would naturally be even greater during times of intense political crisis. Moreover, since apparent Soviet fears of American first-strike intentions may occasion their ultimate resort to a launch-on-warning policy or hair-trigger instrumentation for retaliation, the American nuclear strategy greatly increases the likelihood of accidental nuclear war. In the words of Gerard Smith, former Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, if both sides feared the other would strike first, "the pernicious concept of 'launch-on-warning' will probably again become a matter of interest."[22] This might tempt the United States or the Soviets to launch retaliatory ICBMs solely on the basis of radar warnings; peace would then be hostage to the wisdom and mercy of radars and computers.[23] Indeed, should launch-on-warning policy be adopted by the Soviets, renewed American fears could lead to this country's fulfillment of the adversary's prophecy—an American first strike.

Finally, it should be observed that the strategy of deterrence based on nuclear warfighting below the all-out threshold contributes to the dangerous notion that nuclear war might somehow be endured or even "won," this in the face of an enormous body of scientific and medical evidence indicating that a large-scale nuclear exchange by the superpowers would be an unparalleled

disaster for the human race. Such evidence has been well summed up by Rear Admiral Gene R. LaRocque (USN, Ret.):

> There is no nuclear war strategy that can have any outcome other than mass devastation and catastrophic annihilation of life in both this country and the Soviet Union. The conclusion ought to be obvious to both sides: the best substitute for nuclear 'victory' is a mutual agreement that none is possible, and to quit the most expensive and foolish arms race in history.[24]

ALTERNATIVES TO PD 59

If nations continue to base their hopes for peace and security on the ability to visit nuclear destruction upon an aggressor, they will surely have nuclear war. The road to a durable peace lies not through the implementation of progressively more provocative and problematic counterforce doctrines, but rather through the incremental disengagement of states from a condition of widening nuclear terror. For the time being, the United States should hew to a strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction based upon a reasonable countervalue strategic posture. Thoughts of a counterforce strategy should be forsaken. Meanwhile, we should take three basic steps:

- First, we should reemphasize and publicize to the world the intolerability of nuclear war. The Soviet Union is not entirely immune to world public opinion, so we should undertake a long-term campaign to mobilize that opinion effectively.
- Second, a comprehensive agenda for long-term international security must be created. Such an agenda must aim at removing incentives to states to acquire, enlarge, or "refine" nuclear forces. How might this agenda be implemented? The answer lies in several, interrelated initiatives. Most obvious, perhaps, is the need for a renewed effort on our part to secure the cooperation of Western Europe and Soviet Russia in enforcing a genuine nuclear weapons nonproliferation policy. On a bilateral level, the United States should take the lead in establishing a more harmonious style of interaction with the Soviet Union. Afghanistan and Poland notwithstanding, we cannot allow our relations with the Soviets to deteriorate to a state of incendiary hostility. Needed, at a minimum, is prompt Senate ratification of SALT II; a reversal of current trends toward increased US military spending on nuclear weapons; and a serious US commitment to the principles of arms control and (ultimately) to the staged destruction of existing stockpiles of strategic nuclear weapons.

The move toward minimum deterrence must be augmented by a new American initiative toward a long-sought comprehensive test ban and by an American renunciation of the right to first use of all nuclear weapons. From the point of view of the Soviet Union, the American policy of responding with tactical nuclear weapons to a Warsaw Pact conventional attack against NATO must appear decidedly unsettling, since such a policy (1) permits rapid escalation to strategic nuclear conflict; (2) permits the initiation of general nuclear war masquerading as a circumscribed first use (either by deliberately creating conditions which lead to acts of so-called aggression or by falsely alleging that such acts have actually taken place); and (3) can be employed as a complement to counterforce targeting doctrine. Obviously, it takes two to tango, and no American initiatives will be successful lacking reciprocity on the part of the Soviet Union. But since the fate of the human race hangs in the balance, we should allow neither our pride nor our timidity to forestall the essential initiatives.

Of course, current Soviet policy is disturbing to this country. But the abandonment of the right to first use presently seems more difficult for the United States than for the Soviet Union. This greater commitment to first use stems from fears of American conventional force inferiority in the vital theaters of Western Europe, Southwest Asia, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf.

- Third, it follows that to allow for a credible renunciation of the first-use option, this country must undertake significant

efforts to strengthen its conventional forces and thus eventually to obviate all theater nuclear forces. However expensive such efforts might be (and they would be enormously expensive), their long-term security benefits would surely be "cost effective."

EPILOGUE

At this juncture in its history, the human race can choose enduring peace or global destruction. As one of the two nuclear superpowers inhabiting the globe, the United States will have a decisive voice in which course is chosen. The continuance in force of Presidential Directive 59 makes it less likely that America's voice will speak in behalf of enduring peace.

NOTES

1. A *counterforce* strategy emphasizes the targeting of an adversary's military capability, especially its strategic military capability and the military command and control system. A *countervalue* strategy emphasizes the targeting of an adversary's cities, industries, and population centers. *Mutual Assured Destruction* is a condition in which each adversary possesses the ability to inflict an unacceptable degree of damage upon the other after absorbing a first strike. In the current public dialogue, the strategy embodied in PD 59 is sometimes referred to as a "countervailing strategy" (see, for example, Richard Burt, "Muskie Rebuffs Soviet On Nuclear Strategy Criticism," *The New York Times*, 17 September 1980, p. A3), but in this paper we will use the more restrictive term, "counterforce strategy." For a good brief primer on the PD 59 controversy, consult the pro (Leon Sloss) and con (Paul C. Warnke) feature "Carter's Nuclear Policy: Going from 'MAD' to Worse?" *Los Angeles Times*, 4 September 1980, p. 3. For a more formal treatment, see Jeffrey T. Richelson, "The Dilemmas of Counterpower Targeting," *Comparative Strategy*, 2 (1980), 223-37.

2. Harold Brown, remarks delivered at the Convocation Ceremonies for the 97th Naval War College Class, Newport, R.I., 20 August 1980, p. 7.

3. See "Text of Dulles' Statement on Foreign Policy of Eisenhower Administration," *The New York Times*, 13 January 1954, p. 2.

4. Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957), p. 15.

5. Ibid., p. 166.

6. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Organizations, and Security Agreements, *Analyses of Effects of Limited Nuclear Warfare*, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., September 1975, p. 4.

7. Ibid., p. 5.

8. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Organizations, and Security Agreements, *Hearings, Possible Effects on US Society of Nuclear Attacks Against US Military Installations*, Opening Statement by Senator Clifford P. Case, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., 18 September 1975, p. 3.

9. Ibid., testimony of Dr. Sidney Drell, p. 21.

10. This view emerges repeatedly in Soviet literature on military doctrine and strategy. See, for example, an early article by Colonel V. Mochalov and Major V. Dashichev, "The Smoke Screen of the American Imperialists," *Red Star*, 17 December 1957. Two years later, Bernard Brodie, in his classic study, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959), made the following observations: "Soviet commentary on the limited-war thinking emanating from the West has thus far been uniformly hostile and derisive. Especially derided has been the thought that wars might remain limited while being fought with atomic weapons" (p. 322n). More recently, Professor Richard Pipes, the Harvard Sovietologist, crystallized the Soviet stance: "In the Soviet view, a nuclear war would be total. . . . Limited nuclear war, flexible response, escalation, damage limiting, and all the other numerous refinements of US strategic doctrine find no place in its Soviet counterpart. . . ." ("Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War," *Commentary*, 64 [July 1977], 30). Any remaining doubts about Soviet rejection of the doctrine of limited nuclear war can be dispelled by considering recent writings of Soviet generals which appear regularly in *Strategic Review*. For example, according to General-Major R. Simonyan, a major Soviet strategic planner, "The experience of numerous wars attests most clearly to the fact that military conflagrations have hardly ever been successfully kept within their original bounds" (5 [Spring 1977], 100). And also: "The assertion made by supporters of 'limited' nuclear war that it could be kept within preplanned limits and made 'controllable' is altogether false. Every clear-headed person knows that any war unleashed by an aggressor and involving the use of strategic nuclear weapons—even if those weapons were used in limited numbers and against 'selected targets'—is fraught with the genuine threat of escalation and development into a strategic (universal) nuclear war with all its fatal consequences" (p. 107).

11. Henry Kissinger, "Introduction," in *Problems of National Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 6.

12. *Possible Effects on US Society of Nuclear Attacks Against US Military Installations*, quoted in Drell testimony, p. 19.

13. For support of this position, see "Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Search of a Doctrine," *The Defense Monitor*, 4 (February 1975), especially p. 3; and the special report on "The First Nuclear War Conference," in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 35 (April 1979), 20, especially the remarks by General A. S. Collins Jr. (USA, Ret.).

14. Brown, remarks, p. 6.

15. Edward Rowny, "That 'New' Nuclear Strategy," *The Washington Post*, 25 August 1980, p. 19.

16. Harold Brown, *Department of Defense Annual Report for FY 1981* (Washington: GPO, 1980), p. 66.

17. Ibid., p. 67.

18. Colin S. Gray, "Debate & Discussion: New U.S. Nuclear Strategy," *The Baltimore Sun*, 20 September 1980, p. 14. A companion article by Jeremy J. Stone presents a case against PD 59.

19. "Soviet Charges Reiterated," *The New York Times*, 21 August 1980, p. A8; and Genrikh A. Trofimenko, "Moscow Isn't Worried," *The New York Times*, 22 September 1980, p. 27.

20. Anthony Austin, "Moscow Expert Says U.S. Errs on Soviet War," *The New York Times*, 25 August 1980, p. A2.

21. Drew Middleton, "SAC Chief is Critical of Carter's New Nuclear Plan," *The New York Times*, 7 September 1980, p. 19.

22. Gerard Smith, quoted in "The Nuclear Strategy: Battle of the Dead?" *The Defense Monitor*, 5 (July 1976), 8.

23. Ibid.

24. Gene R. Laroque, quoted in *The Defense Monitor*, 5 (July 1976), 7. For the literature on the consequences of such a disaster, see Tom Stonier, *Nuclear Disaster* (New York: Meridian, 1964); *Long-Term Worldwide Effects of Multiple Nuclear Weapons Detonations* (National Academy of Sciences report, Washington, 12 August 1975); Bernard Feld, "The Consequences of Nuclear War," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 32 (June 1976), 10-13; US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Worldwide Effects of Nuclear War . . . Some Perspectives* (Washington: GPO, n.d. but produced after the 1975 National Academy of Sciences report); Office of Technology Assessment, *The Effects of Nuclear War* (Washington: GPO, May 1979); Physicians for Social Responsibility, "An Open Letter to President Carter and Chairman Brezhnev," *Newsletter*, 1 (April 1980), 1; US Congress, Joint Committee on Defense Production, *Economic and Social Consequences of Nuclear Attacks on the United States*, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., March 1979; Kevin N. Lewis, "The Prompt and Delayed Effects of Nuclear War," *Scientific American*, 240 (July 1979), 35-47; Louis René Beres, *Apocalypse: Nuclear Catastrophe in World Politics* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980); and Franklyn Griffiths and John C. Polanyi, eds., *The Dangers of Nuclear War* (Toronto: Toronto Univ. Press, 1979), especially J. Carson Mark's opening essay, "The Consequences of Nuclear War."