

THE CONCEPT OF LIMITED WAR IN AMERICAN STRATEGY

by

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presented to the University of Manitoba
in fulfillment of the
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in
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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the strategic concept of limited war in American strategy. The analysis of the concept of limited war will be historical in nature beginning with the immediate post-war period. The value of such an approach lies in the cumulative nature of strategy. Strategy is cumulative in the sense that it is not created and refined in a vacuum, but, rather, in a close relationship to the constantly evolving strategic environment, and always reacting to past experience. Consequently, the value of approaching the subject of this thesis from an historical perspective is considerable. The concept of limited war was a reaction to both the experiences of the United States in its early attempts at managing the East-West conflict and to the rapidly developing nuclear environment. The thesis also includes a case study of the Vietnam War as an example of the application of the American concept of limited war. The Vietnam conflict has been the source of much controversy in American political life and has also had a profound effect on military strategy as well. The thesis will conclude by examining the development of military strategy in the post-Vietnam period and determine whether the concept of limited war remains relevant given the current security dilemmas that face the United States.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, who was a casualty of this business.

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Chapter I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POST-WAR STRATEGY

The purpose of this chapter is to set an historical context for a detailed analysis of the concept of limited war in American strategy. Given that the development of a theoretical literature on limited war was a direct response to a specific strategic problem facing the United States, it is important to provide background information that illustrates the the strategic dilemma from which limited war strategy grew. The first section of this chapter will be devoted to a brief analysis of the development of American strategy in the post World War Two period. This discussion will consider the definition of the grand strategic problem of the post-war environment for the United States, specifically, the containment of the Soviet Union. Important milestones in strategy development such as NSC-68, the Korean War, and the Eisenhower "new look" strategy will also receive attention in this chapter.

The second section of the chapter will focus on one of the principal themes of the limited war literature from which the theory of limited war developed. The literature on limited war began after the Korean war and was, in many ways, a product of the American experience in Korea. Limited war literature, however, was also a reaction to the nuclear-centric strategy of the Eisenhower Administration which, in the minds of its critics, was inappropriate given the realities of the

post-war nuclear environment. The theme which dominated not only the early works of the post-Korea period, but the literature of the late 1950's as well, was that American thinking about the relationship between force and politics required a significant reorientation. It was argued by the limited war theorists that the traditional American approach to war, in which force was divorced from politics, was entirely inappropriate for warfare in the nuclear age. It will be argued in this section that the traditional American tendency to see force and politics as separate entities was one of the central problems which limited war theorists sought to correct. This discussion will set the groundwork for a detailed analysis of the theory of limited war in chapter II.

The explosion of an atomic device in the Nevada desert in 1945 was a remarkable scientific event, but no less remarkable a military event as well. As with other great military innovations before it, the nuclear weapon unavoidably altered the way in which future wars would be fought. Furthermore, as for other military innovations, nuclear weapons presented a problem for strategists. In some manner military strategy would have to take account of this new weapon and, one could argue, this could occur in one of two ways; nuclear weapons and strategy could be meshed either by wedding nuclear weapons to existing strategy, or, by devising a new strategy that revolved around them. As we know today, the magnitude of the impact of nuclear weapons was so great that the latter approach could not be avoided. In fact the impact of nuclear weapons was so substantial that the readjustment that was required went beyond simply revising military strategy.

Nuclear weapons have had a profound effect on international politics in the post-war period. Looking back on the early years of the nuclear era, however, reveals that the assumptions we hold as self-evident today with respect to nuclear weapons were not immediately appreciated. The necessary adjustment of military strategy and political attitudes took time to occur and the reasons for this are several.

On the question of military strategy and nuclear weapons, the initial approach by many analysts was to attempt to incorporate them into existing strategy. The idea of decisive strategic bombing, which appeared to have been repudiated by the experience of World War II, was suddenly given new life with the advent of nuclear weapons. The idea that nuclear weapons would not have a war-fighting utility when ones's adversaries also possessed them was not considered by the new air power enthusiasts. From the standpoint of operational planning in the late 1940's, the small numbers of nuclear weapons available led to the assumption that they would merely augment traditional forms of military force.¹ It would be a mistake, however, to suggest that the early post-war period was devoid of any strategic thinking which approximated the concept of deterrence we now associate with nuclear weapons. Bernard Brodie, in a forward-looking analysis written in 1946, viewed the era of American nuclear monopoly as a passing phase. Brodie conceived of a time when both the Soviets and Americans would possess nuclear weapons in significant numbers. In such a situation, according to Brodie, the purpose of nuclear weapons could only be to

¹ See Freedman, Lawrence, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, St. Martin's Press, London, p. 48. and Questor, George, Nuclear Diplomacy, Dunellen Company, New York, 1970. p. 36.

prevent war.² As early as 1946, therefore, the modern concept of nuclear deterrence had been articulated. However, it would not become the centerpiece of American strategy until some time later.

It could be argued persuasively that the impetus to develop modern nuclear strategy first required adjustments in the political sphere. What in retrospect appears to be the slow development of nuclear strategy is in part due to the fact that the grand strategic problem of deterring and containing the Soviet Union was not recognized in the early post-war period. In the immediate post-war years it was assumed by many in the United States that the war-time cooperation between the powers would continue. Despite considerable disagreements between the Allies and the Soviets with regard to post-war political matters, the Truman Administration was initially of the opinion that workable arrangements between East and West were immanently feasible.³ This attitude prevented the urgent consideration of post-war military strategy simply because the problem of containing the Soviet Union had not yet been defined as the great strategic problem for the United States.

By 1947 international events reversed the previously benign attitudes of the United States toward the Soviet Union and the problem of resisting the expansion of communism arrived to dominate the international political agenda. Soviet support of the insurgencies in Turkey and Greece prompted Truman to pledge American assistance to those

² Brodie, Bernard, The Absolute Weapon, Harcourt Brace and Company, New York, 1946. p. 85.

³ Gaddis, John Lewis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American Security Policy, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982. p. 275.

nations under attack from international communism. The Truman Doctrine is significant for two reasons; first, it served to define the grand strategic problem of containing the Soviet Union, and secondly, it globalized containment which, after the subsequent development of a nuclear-centric strategy for extended deterrence, gave impetus to the development of limited war theory. Even after the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, however, American post-war strategy, both military and political, remained underdeveloped.

Again the failure to construct sophisticated strategic policy was in part due to problems in political policy. The conceptual basis of American foreign policy in the late 1940's did not channel intellectual energy into the military aspects of containment. This can be traced to the influence of George Kennan on early containment thinking in the Truman Administration. Through his writings, both public and classified, Kennan stressed the argument that the threat the Soviet Union posed was more psychological than military.⁴ As a result of this conviction Kennan's policy prescriptions were dominated by political and economic means as he considered them to be the best weapons the United States could apply to the containment of the Soviet Union. Naturally there were military implications for a strategy of containment even if it was dominated by political and economic methods of pressure; however, Kennan did not elaborate on them. NSC-20, released in the winter of 1947-48, enshrined containment in official policy, but likewise, did not provide any comprehensive analysis on the military implications of containment.⁵

⁴ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 35.

⁵ George, Alexander L., Smoke, Richard, Deterrence in American Foreign

A final reason why American strategic policy failed to produce well defined doctrine arose from what Henry Kissinger described as a perfect "catch-22" situation;

[a] key problem for arriving at logical doctrine arises from the catch-22 situation of the services being unable to avoid a clash of wills in the absence of a firmly stated doctrine on the one hand and the difficulty in arriving at a doctrine amid internecine service rivalries that complicate the decision-making environment.⁶

The service rivalries were a result of each service attempting to ensure it had a viable role in the new strategic environment. As each service put institutional survival at the centre of their respective positions, no cooperation that could lead to constructive strategic thinking was possible. By the late 1940's, therefore, a comprehensive assessment of American strategy, out of which both military and political policies could flow, had not occurred. The conceptual basis for containment policy had been articulated, but the political and military aspects of it remained to be elucidated.

Two significant events in 1949 created a sense of urgency that American political and military strategy needed review: first, the loss of China to communism, and, secondly, the explosion of an atomic device by the Soviet Union. In the broad context it was thought by many officials that the pivotal problem was that foreign policy and defence policy had in fact moved in opposite directions. According to this argument, while the United States had become involved in an unprecedented level of international commitment, the capacity of the

Policy: Theory and Practice, Columbia University Press, New York, 1974. p. 23.

⁶ Kissinger, Henry A., Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, Harper, New York, 1957. p. 40.

nation to support such a foreign policy in military terms had been sharply curtailed.⁷ With respect to conventional forces, demobilization of the Army made American foreign commitments difficult to honour if they required military action. Furthermore, American sole possession of nuclear weapons prior to 1949 had not given the United States any apparent advantage in dealing with the Soviets over outstanding matters in Europe.⁸ Furthermore, there was a widespread perception within the Eisenhower Administration that, aside from the limited utility nuclear weapons had demonstrated in the recent past, they were going to decline in value as Soviet capabilities grew.⁹ If the United States was going to continue to extend security guarantees to Europe, and especially to regions away from Europe, it was thought necessary to considerably enhance American military capabilities. This line of reasoning could have been easily applied before 1949, however, in the aftermath of the Soviet explosion, any forward-looking analysis would have to have concluded that the Soviet threat was increasing and that the United States would have to react. National Security Document number 68 (NSC-68), accepted in 1950, was a comprehensive assessment of American security policy which drew this very conclusion.

The intended purpose of NSC-68 was to stimulate a greater defence effort on the part of the United States.¹⁰ Given its chief aim, NSC-68

⁷ Huntington, The Common Defense: strategic programs in national politics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1961. pp. 39-47.

⁸ Gaddis, John Lewis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, Columbia University Press, New York, 1972 see chapter VIII

⁹ Trachtenberg, Marc, "A "Wasting Asset": American Strategy and the Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954", International Security, vol. 13 #3, Winter 1988/89, p. 6.

¹⁰ Trachtenberg, "A "Wasting Asset": American Strategy and the Shift-

was not designed to include a refined military strategy that would have the effect of reconciling American military policy with the changed role of military force that nuclear weapons unavoidably imposed; this sort of reconciliation was still to come. A collection of fine points on foreign policy, military strategy, and the use of force in the nuclear environment, was not thought likely to create a powerful enough impression on the American leadership. The authors of NSC-68 were of the opinion that the reversal of the prevailing disinclination to spend on defence would necessitate a dramatic presentation of the overall situation facing the United States. As Dean Acheson, one of the principal architects of NSC-68, admitted years later, "{t}he ultimate purpose of NSC-68...was to so bludgeon the mass mind of top government that not only could the President make a decision but that the decision could be carried out."¹¹

NSC-68 was based on the premise that the Soviet Union presented a grave threat to American interests internationally. It was argued that the Soviet Union sought world domination and that restraint on the part of the communists would only be the result of two factors; first, as a matter of expediency on the part of the Soviets when their resources would not allow for aggressive action, and, secondly, as a result of American counterpressure.¹² With respect to Soviet aggression, American attention was dominated by Europe. Interestingly enough, however, NSC-68 did address the issue of potential challenges

ing Nuclear Balance", p. 15.

¹¹ Donovan, John C., The Cold Warriors: a policy-making elite, Heath, Lexington Mass., 1974. p. 96.

¹² "National Security Document #68" (NSC-68) Naval War College Review, 1972 P. 77.

to the periphery. It was argued in the document that piecemeal aggression at the periphery was a natural strategy for the Soviets to pursue.¹³ The motivation for the Soviets to challenge at the periphery, according to the argument, had to do with the nature of deterrence as it operated at the time. Although the discussion of deterrence in the document at times suffers from ambiguity, and perhaps even contradiction,¹⁴ its authors seem to have assumed that the retaliatory capability of the United States was sufficient to deter a Soviet attack on vital American interests. Problems were thought to arise, however, if the United States faced piecemeal Soviet aggression at the periphery. A peripheral challenge by the Soviets, they argued, would put the United States in a position of great difficulty in making an appropriate response. NSC-68 argued that central war over peripheral concerns was undesirable, and in terms of maintaining a deterrent posture, it lacked credibility;

[t]he risk off having no better choice than to capitulate or precipitate a global war at any number of pressure points is bad enough in itself, but it is multiplied by the weakness it imparts to our position in the cold war. Instead of appearing strong and resolute we are continually at the verge of appearing irresolute and desperate...¹⁵

This criticism of the American strategic position with respect to peripheral challenges was precisely the argument that would be made several years later in the limited war literature that resulted from

¹³ Ibid., P. 69. Also see, Gannon, Michael V., "Limited vs Total War", Commonweal, vol. 68 # 21, August 22 1958,

Gannon refers to B.H. Liddell Hart's thesis that nuclear weapons would have the effect of increasing the possibility of limited wars occurring.

¹⁴ See Ibid., p. 78 and p. 82.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

the Korean experience and the nuclear-centric strategy of the Eisenhower Administration.

Aside from an interesting reflection of the limited war theorists' argument about the soundness of American strategy for peripheral threats, the document also discussed the calibrated use of force that would also become a central concept in limited war literature as well. The implications of the criticisms of American peripheral strategy made in NSC-68 were twofold in nature. From an operational perspective, more conventional force capability would be required to avoid the extremes of acquiescence and total conflict. Doctrinally, the criticisms implied the need for a strategy that could limit conflict and control escalation. A doctrine of this nature would naturally affect the method in which force would be employed to successfully deal with peripheral conflicts. The authors of NSC-68 included a comment which addressed itself to the issue of force application in relation to the type of conflict at hand;

[t]he means to be employed must be proportioned to the extent of the mischief. The mischief may be global war or a Soviet campaign for limited objectives. In either case we should take no avoidable initiative which could cause it to become a war of annihilation, and if we have the forces to defeat the Soviet drive for limited objectives it may well be in our interest not to let it become a global war. Our aim in applying force must be to compel the acceptance of terms consistent with our objectives and our capabilities for the application of force should, therefore, within the limits we can sustain over the long pull, be congruent to the range of tasks which we may encounter.¹⁶

The implication of this statement is that it is possible to clearly relate the scope of the conflict to the political objectives that are at the centre of the dispute. This posited relationship between the

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

objectives sought in a conflict and the means used to achieve them later became one of the central concepts of one approach to the problem of limitation and escalation in the limited war literature. As discussion in chapter II will reveal, such a proposition is open to debate nonetheless, the authors of NSC-68 appear to have concluded that an explicit link between ends and means could be made.

A final, and important aspect of NSC-68, had to do with the type of tasks that American military forces must be prepared to undertake. The document provided a list of specific tasks;

- (1) To defend the Western hemisphere and essential Allied areas in that their war-making capabilities can be developed;
- (2) To provide and protect a mobilization base while the offensive forces required for a victory are being built up;
- (3) To conduct offensive operations to destroy vital elements of the Soviet war-making capacity, and to keep the enemy off balance until the full offensive strength of the United States and its allies can be brought to bear;
- (4) To defend and maintain the lines of communication and the base areas necessary to the execution of the above task; and
- (5) To provide aid to such allies as is essential to the execution of their role in the above tasks.¹⁷

Despite recent criticisms that NSC-68 was responsible for the nuclear-centric strategy that was adopted in the 1950's,¹⁸ the principal character of the operational tasks set forth in the document were more conventional than nuclear. It is quite evident that NSC-68 was heavily influenced by pre-atomic concepts of defence and, contrary to the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁸ See Gaddis, John Lewis, Nitze, Paul, "NSC-68 and the Soviet Threat Reconsidered", International Security, vol. 4 #4, Spring 1980, pp. 164-176.

arguments of some recent critics, not infatuated with nuclear weapons.¹⁹ While there is no doubt it was advocated that the United States should maintain and take every advantage of its nuclear superiority, the authors of NSC-68 appeared to be sensitive to the limitations of nuclear weapons in some categories of conflict. What was advocated by the authors of NSC-68 was an across the board enhancement of American military capabilities in order that threats at various levels could be both deterred and, should deterrence fail, defended.

The recommendations made in NSC-68 were highly controversial within the Truman Administration. From a budgetary point of view the force buildup advocated in NSC-68 was completely inconsistent with Truman's fiscal policy.²⁰ When the document was presented to Truman it was not approved as it stood and, because of its ambitious prescriptions, Truman promptly sent it back for fiscal assessment.²¹ The North Korean attack on South Korea, however, had the affect of validating in the minds of the American leadership many of the arguments contained in NSC-68. Although Asia was not singled out as an area of principal concern in the document, the argument that Soviet expansion could easily be advanced through piecemeal aggression at the periphery was certainly given credence by Korea.²² A second important aspect to the invasion of South Korea was that it presented a conflict in which limitation and escalation were of central concern to the United States.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

²⁰ Kolodziej, Edward A., The Uncommon Defense and Congress 1945-1963, Ohio State University Press, Columbus Ohio, 1966. p. 126.

²¹ See Editors note preceding the document in the Naval War College Review.

²² For the document's discussion of Asia see pp. 76-77.

Korea provided an instance, as the authors of NSC-68 foresaw, where the United States would seek to apply proportional force. Korea, therefore, presented the United States its first "limited war" of the post-45 nuclear era. When Korea began, and for that matter through its entire duration, the United States did not possess a coherent and articulated strategy of limited war. Nonetheless, it was perceived by Americans to have been one. It is important, therefore, to analyze American perceptions of the Korean conflict. Analysis of this variety can provide an insight into American tendencies, even if unconscious, in a limited conflict. Specifically, Korea provides an interesting look at what the United States defined as a limited war and how force could be utilized in such a context.

The first issue to address is what Korea reveals about how the Americans interpreted the motives of the Soviet Union for initiating the challenge to American security at the periphery on the Korean peninsula. One point appeared certain; the Soviet Union was prepared to risk conflict with the United States.²³ This matter can best be resolved by assessing the interpretation(s) of the attack which were ascribed to the Soviet Union. Five different interpretations of the communist's motives for the invasion were entertained.²⁴ One possibility was that the attack was a diversionary move designed to draw American forces away from the European theatre. An operation of this type where the communists would attack at the periphery as a prelude to an assault on Europe, according to NSC-68, was a distinct possibil-

²³ Trachtenberg, "A 'Wasting Asset': American Strategy and the Shifting Nuclear Balance", p. 17.

²⁴ Halperin, Morton H., Limited War in the Nuclear Age, Wiley, New York, 1966. pp. 44-45.

ity.²⁵ A second interpretation was that the attack might be for the purpose of probing a "soft spot". It was assumed by the Americans that communist doctrine compelled the Soviets to fill power vacuums and, given the exclusion of Korea in Dean Acheson's defensive perimeter speech, this explanation appeared plausible. It was also thought that the Soviet Union could be using Korea as a test of American will in an attempt to gauge whether the West would respond to peripheral aggression. This interpretation was given a high profile as the folly of appeasement was almost universally taken as one of the lessons of the last war. A failure to respond to aggression with a firm hand was thought to potentially encourage more aggression because, in a manner of speaking, it rewarded such activity. A fourth interpretation was that the Soviet Union wished to demonstrate its strength, and, therefore, equally demonstrate American weakness. The benefit of creating the impression of American weakness, according to the rationale behind this interpretation, was that it could effect long term shifts in the allegiance of other states that would favour the Soviet Union. Finally, it was suggested that the attack might represent an aspect of a Soviet Far-East strategy that was ultimately designed to prevent Japanese alignment with the West.

President Truman's personal opinion was that Korea represented a possible diversionary attack and a test of American will.²⁶ These two interpretations, in essence, underwrote American policy in Korea and, therefore, were influential in structuring the American response. In the first instance, the fact that Korea was seen as a test of American

²⁵ NSC-68, p. 65.

²⁶ Halperin, Limited War in the Nuclear Age, p. 45.

will meant that some form of response was imperative. The memory of Munich was still very vivid and, given American perceptions of Soviet global designs, appeasement in Korea would represent the first step in the dismantlement of the free world. The belief that Korea could be a diversionary move by the Soviets, with the ultimate objective lying in Europe, led to a strong conviction that both the objectives and the means used to achieve them must be limited. The determination to not allow Korea to escalate to total war was firmly held by the civilian leadership. The military, with the exception of General MacArthur, was also of this opinion. General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1950, argued that every effort had to be made not to expand the conflict as neither Korea nor China was the "critical strategic prize".²⁷

The importance of this consensus on restraint in Korea was that it led to the conviction that, from the outset of the conflict, the political objectives sought by the United States were necessarily limited. It followed logically, according to the Truman Administration, that if American political objectives were limited then so must be the use of force. The relationship between ends and means that NSC-68 suggested had to be the basis of American strategy therefore, and formed the basic approach to limited war in Korea. The limitations that were evident in Korea were of two types: first, the geographic scope of the conflict; and, secondly, the type of weapons employed. In the case of the geographical limit, American forces were restricted to operations within the Korean peninsula despite the considerable

²⁷ Foot, Rosemary, The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict 1950-53, Cornell University Press, 1985. p. 23.

advantages of attacking supply bases and airfields in China. In the case of weaponry, operations were limited to conventional forces. The reasons for not employing nuclear weapons were several.²⁸ In the first instance, the interpretation of Korea as a possible diversionary attack led to the belief that the use of nuclear weapons in Korea would be a waste of scarce and valuable resources that were better conserved if Europe came under attack. From an operational point of view, many field commanders argued that suitable targets for a nuclear strike did not exist in North Korea. Finally, there was pressure from the allies, primarily the British, not to use nuclear weapons, and Truman agreed with this sentiment. The President felt that nuclear weapons were only a measure of last resort and, given the limited objectives in Korea, their use was not warranted.²⁹

While the Truman Administration's attitude toward the conduct of Korea displayed some rudimentary recognition of concepts that would later be developed in the limited war literature of the post-Korea period, the lack of a formally articulated strategy led to some difficulties. Although the Truman Administration was adamant that military operations be subservient to political considerations, their understanding of the ends-means relationship was not without fault. Specifically, there was not a clear understanding that the application of military force could constitute a form of communication with the adversary. As later limited war literature would argue, the application of force could be used either to demonstrate restraint, hopefully

²⁸ See Halperin, Morton H., "The Limiting Process in the Korean War", in Guttman, Allan, Korea and the Theory of Limited War, D.C. Heath & Company, Boston, 1967. pp. 99-100.

²⁹ Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, p. 52.

eliciting the same response from the enemy, or for the purpose of coercing him to comply with one's objectives. The inability to clearly recognize these distinctions about the application of force was well demonstrated by the decision to cross the 34th parallel.

The United States was concerned about the possibility of Chinese intervention in the conflict, and, despite the assurances that were offered to them regarding American objectives, decision-makers failed to appreciate the message that would be sent by escalating operations to include ground troops in North Korea. To the Chinese the introduction of combat troops into the north might appear quite logically to signal a change in American political objectives. Assuming that the Chinese perceived that the defence of South Korea by the United States displayed limited American objectives, an attack on the North would be difficult to interpret in any other way other than as a change in political objectives. Under such circumstances the Chinese would likely have felt there was no alternative but to respond lest their territory become the next to be attacked. The verbal assurances sent by the United States were probably seen by the Chinese as a less accurate way of interpreting American intentions than was the manner in which the Americans used force. Aside from an apparent lack of understanding of the signalling aspect of force application in a limited war, the Americans also failed to foresee the coercive value of military force in preventing Chinese intervention;

[i]n crossing the parallel the United Nations command was aware that it might trigger Chinese communist intervention, and tried by reassuring statements to prevent it. But, it apparently underestimated the Chinese reaction and at the same time failed to develop a concurrent strategy which, by retaliatory threats or other sanctions, could succeed in

preventing Chinese intervention.³⁰

These types of distinctions would be made in subsequent years in the limited war literature which came into existence after Korea, and in a practical application, were demonstrated clearly in the Vietnam conflict.

In spite of the fact that the experience of the Korean war had much to do with the generation of the limited war literature in the 1950's, the lesson drawn from Korea by many individuals was that limited wars were to be avoided at all costs. Although the American public was supportive at the outset of the conflict, the inability of the Truman Administration to achieve quickly some form of meaningful victory became a political liability.³¹ Avoiding the escalation of the Korean conflict to that of general war was popular; but the public, as well as many within government circles, became frustrated over the fact that no victory seemed attainable under the restraints imposed by the Truman Administration. This frustration was most poignantly illustrated in Truman's dismissal of General MacArthur. MacArthur's removal from command was greeted with public outrage, and the Senate initiated hearings to investigate the incident. Not surprisingly, the hearings brought out the conflict that had led to the General's dismissal. Essentially, the controversy centred on the nature of political control over the conduct of military operations. MacArthur's refusal to remain bound to the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief, President Truman, revealed a cleavage between two different concepts

³⁰ Halperin, "The Limiting Process in the Korean War", p. 101.

³¹ Hamby, Alonzo L., "Public Opinion: Korea and Vietnam", Wilson Quarterly, vol. 2 1978, p. 141.

of force application.

It was not accepted by the Administration that the war could be directed on the basis of purely military considerations. President Truman insisted that the conduct of operations in Korea had to conform to political imperatives. The administration's interpretation of the significance of Korea as a test of American will, but more importantly, a challenge at the periphery and not toward the vital theatre of Europe, demanded that American resources not be totally committed or expended in Korea. This constituted a political objective to which military operations had to be oriented and unavoidably led to the limited employment of military means in Korea. Truman was not alone in advocating such politically determined limitations. General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, clearly stated in his testimony before the congressional hearings the importance of restraint in Korea;

Korea, despite the importance of the engagement, must be looked upon with proper perspective. It is just one engagement just one phase of the battle.... We have recommended against enlarging the war. The course of action often described as a "limited war" with Red China would increase the risk we are taking by engaging too much of our power in an area that is not the critical strategic prize.

Frankly, in the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff this strategy would involve us in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong enemy....³²

The conduct of Korea in terms of military operations, therefore, had to be driven by political considerations that took into account the larger context of American and Western security.

³² Rees, David, Korea: The Limited War, MacMillan, London, 1964. p. 274.

General MacArthur, on the other hand, disagreed with the subordination of what he saw as military imperatives to political interests. In MacArthur's mind the control of military operations by anything other than military considerations was a deviation from accepted principles of war. MacArthur outlined his argument about the proper relationship between force and politics at the congressional hearings as well;

[t]he general definition which for many decades has been accepted was that war was the ultimate process of politics; that when all other political means failed, you then go to force; and that when you do that, the balance of control...is the control of the military.... I do unquestionably state that when men become locked in battle, that there should be no artifice under the name of politics, which should handicap your own men....³³

Whereas the Administration's concept of operations in Korea implied that it was necessary to relate political objectives and the means used to achieve those objectives, and that means must serve politically defined ends, MacArthur's view posited a very different relationship. MacArthur conceived of politics and force as exclusive entities. It was the purpose of politics to attempt to avoid the use of force; however, if political efforts failed and one was compelled to use force, politics ceased to be relevant. In short, once war was declared, politics and force had no relationship. The conduct of war was a matter of military imperatives, and when the enemy was defeated then politics could resume. This concept of war was entirely un-Clausewitzian but, as later discussion will reveal, it conformed to what was seen by the limited war theorists as the "traditional American way of war". The important point for the immediate discussion, however, is that Korea, rather than clearly demonstrating the necessity of

³³ Ibid., p. 267.

developing limited war strategy and the forces to support it, was taken to have demonstrated the need to devise a different form of response.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower succeeded President Truman in office and managed to achieve an armistice in Korea. Eisenhower's method of bringing the conflict to an end, or at least his perception of it, was significant for the directions that defense strategy would take in his administration, and specifically, for the limited war theorists who reacted to what they saw as an inappropriate strategy to deal with peripheral security interests. In order to bring an end in Korea Eisenhower decided to put pressure on the communists by letting it be known that he was considering the use of nuclear weapons if a negotiated settlement could not be reached. When explaining why the threat to expand the war was necessary, Eisenhower stated that the United States must conduct itself in Korea in a fashion that would induce the enemy to want peace as did the Americans.³⁴ This strategy reflected the concept of communication and coercion through the use or threat of force which was lacking in the Truman Administration, and which would later become a central concept within the limited war literature. It has been argued that Eisenhower's threat to use nuclear weapons in fact might not have influenced the decision by the communists to negotiate. After several years of fighting, according to this argument, a sort of stalemate occurred where the Americans were unwilling to make the commitment of forces to unify Korea, and that the North, with the

³⁴ Kinnard, Douglas, President Eisenhower and Strategy Management: A Study in Defense Politics, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 1977. p. 4.

aid of the Chinese, were unable to make such an effort successful.³⁵ It is impossible to conclusively credit or discredit Eisenhower's perception that the nuclear threat brought the North to the negotiating table; however, the important issue is how such perceptions, mistaken or not, affected subsequent strategy.³⁶

President Eisenhower's impressions of the Korean conflict, and its effect on the United States, had a role in forming a central assumption upon which his administration would construct its defence policy. When Eisenhower travelled to Korea as President-elect to personally assess the situation, he was struck by what he saw as the dissipation of American resources in a remote and indecisive conflict.³⁷ This impression, combined with his perspective on what the nature of the long range competition between East and West would be, led to the pivotal assumption that the United States must provide for its defence over the long haul, but do so practising fiscal restraint. It was Eisenhower's feeling that the Soviet threat was not only military, but economic as well. If the Soviet Union succeeded in causing the United States to engage in enormous amounts of defence spending in order to keep them in check, it was possible that the U.S. would collapse financially.³⁸ The final implications of containment had a substantial, if not dominant, role to play in the formation of strategy under

³⁵ Kinnard, President Eisenhower and Strategy Management, p. 27.

³⁶ Foot, Rosemary, "Nuclear Coercion and the Ending of the Korean Conflict", International Security, vol. 13 #3, Winter 1988/89, pp. 92-93.

³⁷ Rees, Korea, p. 403.

³⁸ Weigley, Russell F., The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy, MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1973, pp. 400-401.

Eisenhower.

The Eisenhower Administration's perception that the threat to consider the use of nuclear weapons had brought Korea to a close handily satisfied the concern for fiscal restraint. Both Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles, his Secretary of State, believed that the key to manipulating the communists was not to respond to their actions with symmetrical reactions, but, rather, to respond asymmetrically.³⁹ The perceived success of this tactic in Korea led to the belief that an asymmetrical response strategy was the best one to pursue over the long run as well. Furthermore, a strategy based on an asymmetrical response - essentially the use of nuclear weapons as a coercive instrument - was also fiscally more acceptable.

When it came to defining an approach to defence policy the Eisenhower Administration, quite naturally, reacted to the approach of its predecessor contained in NSC-68. With respect to the significance of the threat posed by the Soviet Union, Eisenhower and his colleagues did not disagree with the interpretation given by NSC-68. Eisenhower's inaugural address served notice that the new President felt the balance-of-power to be delicately poised and that communist expansion was not to be tolerated.⁴⁰ Where the Eisenhower Administration took a radical departure from NSC-68 was over the assumption of the means avail-

³⁹ The terminology of symmetrical and asymmetrical response is used by John Gaddis in "Strategies of Containment". It is Gaddis's thesis that the United States has fluctuated between containment strategies that have either incorporated symmetrical responses to Soviet challenges (for example Truman in Korea and Kennedy in Vietnam) or asymmetrical response (Eisenhower in the new look and in a unique format, Nixon with Detente).

⁴⁰ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, pp. 129-130.

able to the United States in underwriting containment. NSC-68's assertion that means were relatively unlimited was rejected, and, instead, the fiscally driven "long haul" approach was substituted. The essence of this approach was not maximum effort over the short term, as implied by NSC-68, but, rather, an optimum effort over the long term. This approach satisfied Eisenhower's perception that the Soviet threat would manifest itself over the long run and that the United States had to guard against a financial crisis.

The other important development in defence policy in the Eisenhower period was the shift to a reliance on nuclear weapons to provide for deterrence at the centre and the periphery. In 1953 Eisenhower commissioned a project known as "Operation Solarium" where independent groups studied one of three options for American security policy.⁴¹ The three options considered were: first, the continuation of the Truman strategy of containment; second, a strategy of nuclear deterrence with the implied threat of retaliation for any communist aggression at the centre or the periphery; and finally, the roll back of the Soviet sphere of influence by all means short of war. At the conclusion of the project the first option was approved but, significantly, with some modification in the direction of the second. The containment strategy of the Truman Administration was to be continued, however, the specific strategy for its successful implementation was different. The second strategy option that stressed nuclear deterrence became the centerpiece of American containment strategy. The inclination to invoke nuclear deterrence, as John Gaddis has argued, was the result of both the desire to contain the Soviets less expensively and the

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 145-146.

apparent profitability of asymmetrical response that Korea had demonstrated.

The shift to a nuclear-centric policy was the hallmark of the Eisenhower Administration and its "new look" policy. It was stated in NSC-162/2, in which the new look policy was initially presented, that in the event of war with the Soviet Union or China nuclear weapons would be used. By 1955 Eisenhower had extended this basic tenet to include limited war scenarios as well.⁴² The threat to consider the use of nuclear weapons not only for major security violations, but for peripheral aggression as well, became known as the policy of "massive retaliation". Massive retaliation was consistent with the Eisenhower Administration's predilection for asymmetrical response. Such a strategy, according to its proponents, returned the initiative to the United States. No longer could the adversary choose the location where the United States would have to respond, as was the case under symmetrical response, nor could the adversary choose the type of response that would be made. Massive retaliation implied that an attack might not be responded to in the same theatre of operations and that the response might not be limited to the same type of means as the initial aggression. The applicability and credibility of the new look policy was tied to four assumptions; that there would be no significant increase in international tensions; that there would be no significant increase in Soviet capabilities; that massive retaliatory capabilities would deter both general and nuclear war; and that in the event of the failure of deterrence, that nuclear weapons would be used

⁴² Ibid., p. 150.

in both general and limited conflict.⁴³ These assumptions were not universally accepted in official or academic circles, however, and the controversy over Eisenhower's new look led to a lively debate on strategy that produced the limited war literature of the 1950's.

The limited war literature of the 1950's took as its initial theme the matter of the relationship between force and politics in American strategy. It was felt by those analysts who were critical of the new look that American thinking about the use of force was unsound. This criticism could have been made about American strategy prior to the advent of nuclear weaponry; but now the shortcomings of American thinking became even more pronounced in the nuclear age. Bernard Brodie, whose 1946 classic "The Absolute Weapon" foreshadowed some of the new directions in strategy that would be required in the nuclear age, was one of the strongest critics of the Eisenhower Administration's strategy of massive retaliation. The threat of massive retaliation, Brodie argued, could be made only to deter the most insidious forms of aggression.⁴⁴ The credibility of such a threat was problematic for two reasons. In the first instance, if the Soviets initiated a challenge at the periphery, it was questionable whether they would believe that the United States would instantly retaliate with nuclear weapons. In spite of Eisenhower's threat to consider the use of nuclear weapons in Korea, the conflict provided an example of restraint in the employment of nuclear force. Despite the overwhelming superiority of the United States, there were substantial political impediments to using nuclear

⁴³ Huntington, The Common Defense, p. 75.

⁴⁴ Brodie, Bernard, "Unlimited Weapons and Limited War" The Reporter, 18 November 1954, p. 16.

weapons. Beyond the restraint that political considerations imposed, it was necessary to take into account the fact that the Soviet Union was developing a nuclear capacity as well. Brodie criticized the Eisenhower Administration for failing to pay attention to this important fact;

[t]he American official attitude...seems to be one of ignoring Soviet nuclear capabilities as a reality to be contended with in planning. The general idea is that it is we, not they, who will do the striking, and they, not we, who will do the suffering.⁴⁵

Instant retaliation, therefore, would likely lead to counter-retaliation, and in the end to general war. The strategy of massive retaliation would be credible only if the United States was prepared to risk generating full scale war over the specific values they were trying to protect.⁴⁶

It was not that the strategy of massive retaliation was thought inappropriate in all contingencies; rather, that it was not appropriate for the types of challenges the United States had faced in the post-war period and were likely to face in the future. If the Soviets adopted the indirect approach to altering the balance-of-power between East and West by challenging at the periphery, as NSC-68 suggested was probable, the implications of the strategy of massive retaliation were horrific. The strategy of massive retaliation applied to peripheral conflicts meant the inevitable risk of general nuclear war for security threats which did not represent a challenge to vital American interests. Clearly the initiation of nuclear war over peripheral con-

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁶ Bowles, Chester, "Our Present Foreign Policy", Commonweal, LX April 30 1954, p. 90.

flicts in no way served American political objectives. Nonetheless, the strategy of massive retaliation raised the spectre of just such results. Consequently, the proponents of limited war focused on what they perceived to be a distorted relationship between force and politics at the centre of American strategy.

The critics of the "new look" strategy invoked the famous Clausewitzian dictum that war was simply the extension of politics by other means as the most telling indictment of American thinking about the relationship between force and politics. The assertion that war was no more than an extension of national policy by different means lies at the centre of Clausewitzian thinking about war. In fact, one could argue, if the use of force by a nation contradicted the political purpose, Clausewitz would not have defined it as war. The use of force without political purpose could only be viewed, by definition, as senseless violence. War, therefore, always serves a political purpose and, consequently, the decision to wage it and the effort expended are determined by the political objectives sought. It was the opinion of the limited war theorists that the proper relationship between force and politics that Clausewitzian thinking represented was not reflected in the American tradition of war.

We live in a generation that has identified itself with slogans that Clausewitz would have regarded as preposterous - that every modern war must be total war; that wars must be fought for total victory, "unconditional surrender", and the like - slogans that utterly negate the older conceptions of war as "continuation of (presumably rational) policy."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Brodie, "Unlimited Weapons and Limited War", p. 19.

Using Clausewitzian thinking as the model for the proper relationship between force and politics, many of the leading limited war theorists' charged that American thinking about war was completely un-Clausewitzian in that force and politics were conceived of as separate entities. As previously argued, the cleavage between General MacArthur and his superiors on the conduct of operations in Korea provides a clear example of traditional American thinking about the role of politics in war. Nothing could be less Clausewitzian than this conception of war. Just as the Clausewitzian theory about war evolved out of the idea that war and politics were inextricably linked, with the former being a servant of the latter, the limited war theorists critique of American strategic thinking developed out of the contention that the American way of war contravened this essential relationship between force and politics.

The limited war theorists critique of American thinking about war advanced two interrelated themes as the basis of the difficulty the United States was having in devising appropriate strategy in the post-war nuclear environment; first, a predilection to view war as an illegitimate tool of the state, and secondly, the notion of a separation between the concept of political and military victory that led to an inability to see war as a purely political act and not a crusade for nebulous philosophical ideals.⁴⁸ The tendency to view war as an aberration rather than a logical extension of state policy when other means had failed certainly put the United States at odds with Clausewitzian thinking. This in turn led to the separation of politics from

⁴⁸ Osgood, Robert E., Limited War: the challenge to American strategy, University of Chicago Press, 1957, pp. 21-23.

the use of force and, when force was used, led to the prosecution of conflict as a crusade rather than as a purely political act. The separation of politics and force, according to limited war theorists, therefore, represented the primary obstacle to sound strategic thinking in the nuclear age. The difficulty facing the United States was that the necessary changes in strategic thinking went against the American military tradition and its role in supporting American foreign policy.

The great idealistic goals that have traditionally provided the dynamism and inspiration of American foreign policy, insofar as they can be attained at all by military means, must be attained through a series of moderate steps toward intermediate objectives, defined in terms of rational power and interest.⁴⁹

Osgood and other analysts saw the tendency to pursue total objectives, coupled with the separation of force and politics, as a severe impediment to strategy development. Henry Kissinger, in his classic "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy", made precisely the same argument. Kissinger suggested that the American historical experience had affected American attitudes and thereby inhibited the development of strategic doctrine. America's traditional geographic isolation, Kissinger argued, resulted in the conception of threats to the national interest as being unambiguous in nature.⁵⁰ In other words, any threat to American national security that required a military response represented a direct threat to the survival of the nation. In meeting this threat, therefore, the United States would pursue total objectives given the total nature of the challenge it faced. Kissinger's argu-

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁵⁰ Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, p. 8.

ment brought out the same distinctions about American post-war strategy that other limited war theorists perceived; the United States tended to pursue total objectives in conflict, and this in turn led to the separation of force and politics. The end result of the traditional American way of war, coupled with the nature of the strategic environment of the post-war era, was the complete inability to devise a doctrine that could provide security and do so without constantly raising the spectre of total war irrespective of the degree of the challenge at hand. Kissinger described the state of American strategy in the following manner;

[t]he consequences of military actions which seemed open to us always appeared to outbalance the gains to be achieved. Thus our policy became entirely defensive. We possessed a doctrine to repel overt aggression, but we could not translate it into a strategy for achieving positive goals. Even in the one instance where we resisted aggression by military power, we did not use the weapons around which our whole military planning had been built. The gap between military and national policy was complete. Our power was not commensurate with the objectives of our national policy, and our military doctrine could not find any intermediate application for the new weapons.⁵¹

Before introducing the basic outlines of the type of strategy that the limited war theorists advocated, it is necessary to briefly examine some of the literature of the so-called "American way of war". This is important because considerable disagreement exists about the accuracy of the criticisms that have been made by the limited war theorists and other analysts that have followed them. Essentially there are two schools of thought on the American traditions of military policy. On the one hand, there are those - the limited war theorists among them - who believe that American historical experience has

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

led to a unique approach to issues of war and peace by the United States. The themes which dominate this school are: the United States tends to define threats to its security as being total in nature; that the response to security threats necessitates unlimited objectives on the part of the United States; and, finally, that Americans traditionally conceive of politics and war as separate entities. Those who take exception to this interpretation of American thinking about war, on the other hand, argue that such an interpretation of American political-military policy is the result of the failure to properly assess the military history of the United States. In the end, therefore, the "American way of war" is nothing more than a myth invented by modern strategists as a vehicle for advancing their personal prescriptions.⁵²

It is Booth's contention that the myth of the American way of war is the product of post-war strategists who ignored the nuances of American military history and experience. For example, he argues that the charge that Americans do not let politics interfere with the conduct of war is patently false. In support of this assertion Booth cites the Civil War as an excellent demonstration of the search for political objectives through the use of force. Lincoln's attempt at the start of the Civil War to devise a moderate strategy that would help reconciliation between North and South, Booth argues, clearly displays an understanding that military operations must support polit-

⁵² For example see; Booth, Ken, "American Strategy: The Myths Revisited", in Booth, Ken, Wright, Moorhead, American Thinking About War and Peace, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1978; Stuart, Reginald C., War and American Thought: From The Revolution To The Monroe Doctrine, The Kent State University Press, Kent Ohio, 1982.

ical objectives.⁵³ American participation in World War II, taken by the proponents of the American way of war to be the quintessential example of the divorce of politics and force, also constitutes a myth according to Booth. The late entry of the United States into the war, the considerable disagreements between the Americans and the Allies about strategy, and the pursuit of unconditional surrender were not examples of failing to relate political objectives and the application of force, but, rather, a reflection of American as opposed to European political priorities.⁵⁴ Those who suggest that American conduct in the war demonstrates the separation of force in American thinking, according to Booth, have taken a "Euro-centric" view of the conflict.

There also exists some resistance to the concept of absolutes in the American conduct of military campaigns.⁵⁵ The instances most often cited as examples of the tendency of Americans to pursue absolutes are the unconditional surrender policy of World War II and the extremism of the doctrine of massive retaliation. Exception has been taken to this argument as well. Booth suggests that a balanced analysis of World War II would have to lead one to conclude that, barring excessive faith in the opposition to Hitler or a less harsh view of Nazi policy, the policy of unconditional surrender was completely justified. According to this argument there was little choice, given the nature of the conflict in World War II, other than to totally defeat the Nazis and, therefore, the policy of unconditional surrender did

⁵³ Booth, American Thinking About Peace and War, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 14-16.

⁵⁵ For a good statement of the idea of absolutes in American military actions, see: Kittredge, T.B., "National Objectives and War Aims from 1775 to 1955, Marine Corps Gazette, vol. 40, 1956.

not violate the principle that politics determine the use of force. The policy of unconditional surrender was applied to Japan as well. With respect to massive retaliation, Booth argues that the popular treatments of both Dulles as an individual, as well as his famous doctrine, have been unfair. The statements by Dulles that reflected flexibility and restraint have been ignored by his critics, primarily out of self-interest in the promotion of opposing strategic ideas.⁵⁶ To some extent the arguments made by Booth in support of his contention that the American way of war is simply a myth that grew out of the peculiarities of the post-war strategic environment are not without validity. It would be unjust to suggest that the Americans rejected political considerations in the use of force to the extent that every conflict could be likened to a "Carthaginian" crusade. Korea was a very apt demonstration of the fact that political imperatives did affect the way in which the United States applied its military might. What is important to consider is not whether Americans displayed universal idiosyncrasies in their use of force, but, rather, if American historical experience resulted in a tendency to approach conflict in a distinct, and possibly, problematic fashion.

The most dramatic factor to assess in terms of American historical experience and its effect on American thinking about military matters is that of geography. In fact, one might convincingly argue that along with taking the torch of political leadership in the West, the Americans also surpassed their European elders as the grand geo-strategic thinkers. The roots of American geo-strategic thinking, and their perceptions about the causes of war, cannot be separated from

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 25-27.

the fact that by declaring their independence from Britain they broke away from the European state system.⁵⁷ The effect of this separation from the European state system can not be dismissed as insignificant. It brought a lengthy period of relative peace and isolation from the difficulties associated with Europe. It is from this period that the American isolationist tradition takes its roots, and both the luxury and desire to remain unentangled in the competitiveness of European politics resulted in a distinctly American view of the use of military force. According to this argument, the conflicts in which the United States found itself involved during its classic isolationist phase led to the perception that war was waged for national survival. The three conflicts the United States experienced through this period were the war of 1812; the Civil War; and the Mexican American War. In each case American survival was seen to be at stake. The War of 1812 found the United States in conflict with Britain from whom she had just separated and the episode has been remembered in a slightly hyperbolic fashion as the second war of independence.⁵⁸ The Mexican War was identified with the concept of Manifest Destiny, which had the effect of again raising the idea that this was a part of ensuring national security.⁵⁹ As for the Civil War, there is little doubt, irrespective of which side one views the conflict from, that it was perceived to be a conflict in which national survival was involved. The end result of the American experience in using military force during the nineteenth

⁵⁷ Rapoport, Anatol, "Changing Conceptions of War in the United States", in Booth and Wright, American Thinking About War and Peace, p. 61.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 62.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 63.

century was a perception that war was a campaign to ensure national survival. It is from this perception that the tendency to wage war with the objective of totally defeating the enemy and dictating the terms of peace takes its form.

Another ramification of American separation from the European state system, one could argue, was that it affected American perceptions of the objectives that should be sought in war. If one analyzes the role of war in Europe during the classic balance-of-power system it is plainly evident that war was not always fought for total objectives. In a balance-of-power system security was not a universally distributed value, that is to say, not all states enjoyed equal security benefits under the system. Some states, in order to maintain the overall balance-of-power within the system as a whole, may disappear through conflicts which adjust the balance. Conversely, it is equally important that conflict not be pursued in a manner that removes certain critical actors from the system, either totally or in terms of ranking within the system, in order that the balance-of-power be maintained.⁶⁰ For Europeans, therefore, the concept of war as the pursuit of total objectives, and concomitantly the idea that one could achieve total security, was not an attitude that could be fostered from their historical experience. For the United States, on the other hand, its separation from the European state system led to precisely these conceptions. The isolationist period did not imbue Americans with a tradition of balance-of-power thinking where limited conflicts were a part of the maintenance of stability among a cluster of major powers.

⁶⁰ See Vose Gulick, Edward, Europe's Classical balance-of-power, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1955.

As argued earlier, the American experience with war in the post-independence era led to the belief that war was for national survival. In the American mind, consequently, security itself was conceived of as an absolute value. Threats to national security, therefore, were perceived in absolute terms, and the objectives which Americans thought should be pursued were also absolute. Victory in war was defined in military terms and this attitude led to the general abhorrence on the part of Americans for political limitations in the application of military force. Korea provides a vivid example of the clash between what was the traditional American view on how to conduct war and the use of limited force under strict political control. In the Senate hearings on his dismissal, General MacArthur eloquently stated his disapproval of the Administration's failure to follow what in his mind were the established principles of war;"...when men become locked in battle... there should be no artifice under the name of politics, which should handicap your own men".⁶¹

American perceptions about the significance of war in terms of national security, the objectives that should be sought when the resort to arms was taken, and the relationship between force and politics, naturally had a profound influence on the development of American strategy. With the conception that security was an absolute value, strategic doctrine took on the quality of an all encompassing panacea to American security dilemmas. John Shy offers an interesting analysis of what he sees as a conceptual link between the various strategic doctrines that have underpinned American military thinking

⁶¹ Rees, Korea, p. 267.

since the time of Alfred Thayer Mahan.⁶² From the time of Mahan's writings on seapower in the 1890's to the present, Shy identifies three doctrines that have dominated American strategic thinking; seapower, airpower, and the strategic concept of flexible response (limited war). Each doctrine has corresponded to an epoch of American foreign policy. In the case of seapower, the doctrine was associated with the period of so-called American imperialism in the Caribbean and Far East. Airpower, although not an American invention, was enthusiastically subscribed to through the interwar period and after the war during the brief reign of massive retaliation. The strategic concept of flexible response, Shy associates with the period of global containment of communist supported revolutions.

In terms of substance each doctrine differs from the other, and in many ways each was a reaction to a different problem. Seapower was a critique of traditional defensive notions of American security. Airpower was a reaction to the great costs of conventional warfare that were so starkly demonstrated by World War I. The strategic concept of flexible response, in turn, was a reaction against the airpower-massive retaliation thinking of the post-Korea period.⁶³ In spite of the differences in substance of each doctrine, as well as the strategic problems each addressed, Shy argues that there is a remarkable thread of consistency which runs through them all;

the elements of continuity are...most impressive....They have not only underpinned foreign policy; at times they have themselves created foreign policy, as in 1964-65, when the

⁶² Shy, John, "The American Military Experience: History and Learning", Journal Of Inter-Disciplinary History, Vol.1 #2 Winter 1971, pp. 202-228.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 225.

existence of military force and a doctrine for its employment seemed to move into a vacuum of informed and constructive political thinking. This resonance is fully explained only when we see how each doctrine has rested upon, and drawn for emotional sustenance, the characteristic attitudes and beliefs that were implanted, transmitted, and reinforced by almost four centuries of American military experience. Each doctrine incorporates within it something like what we call an absolute or dichotomous conception of security. The United States is secure, or it is not; it is threatened, or it is not. None of the doctrines, even the strategic concept of flexible response, really allows for differences in degree or quality of threat. Both sea and air doctrine argue that effective military action must be total, and that anything less is worse than useless.⁶⁴

In other words, while each doctrine addressed different challenges to American security, each reflected the American tradition of conceptualizing security as an absolute, and that military force should be applied in an absolute form to protect it.

In conclusion, therefore, while those who argue that the "American way of war" is a myth are correct in arguing that the American tradition of military thinking is not entirely separate from the European experience, there are nonetheless idiosyncrasies that are peculiarly American. For example, charges that Americans never let politics intrude into wars; that Americans never thought seriously about military strategy prior to 1945; or perhaps, that Americans have consistently thought that peace was the normal pattern of international relations, are open to legitimate criticism. As previously argued, however, the critical issue in settling the dispute as to whether an American way of war exists is to ask whether historical experience has resulted in a tendency to view concepts such as war, security, and the use of force, in a unique fashion. In response to this question, the body of evidence is substantial enough to allow for the assertion that

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 225.

there indeed does exist an American tradition in military affairs. It was against this tradition in military affairs that the limited war theorists were reacting in the 1950's, and it is worthwhile at this point to briefly consider their criticisms, as well as to outline the alternative doctrine they advocated.

It was the conviction of all the proponents of limited war that it was paramount that the United States come to terms with both its tradition in military affairs and the strategic requisites of the nuclear age. As Henry Kissinger argued in "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy", power and diplomacy, which the American historical tradition had separated, had be brought together. In the nuclear age the potential for mass destruction was such that under almost any circumstance the resort to total war could not serve any meaningful political objective. It was incumbent upon Americans, therefore, to rigidity adhere to Clausewitz's dictum that the use of force be determined purely by political objectives. Given that rational political objectives could not be served by total war involving nuclear weapons, the only alternative, other than renouncing the use of force completely, was the pursuit of a strategy of limited war. Inherent in such a strategy would be the institution and maintenance of limits that would allow for the attainment of political objectives while precluding escalation to nuclear war.

It is important to note that the strategy which the limited war theorists advocated was not a departure from the political objectives of the strategy which they sought to replace. Limited war was a containment strategy, but one which applied different means to the same

end. In the same way that the policy of massive retaliation was intended to deter adversaries, the purpose of limited war strategy was to provide a credible threat of the use of force which would have the effect of causing the adversary to reconsider his intended action. In other words, limited war sought to extend deterrence beyond America's borders to the peripheral areas under threat, and should deterrence fail, fight a war with a strategy that could prevent the conflict from escalating to levels where rational political objectives could not exist. None of the reasoning as to why a strategy of limited war was required, given the nature of the nuclear environment, was all that complicated; still, devising a theory of limited war was a far more involved and complicated task. It was necessary to engage in a thorough analysis of the dynamics of the limitation and escalation process before a workable strategy could be attained. These types of analyses were a product of the latter half of the 1950's. Chapter II will be devoted to a detailed consideration of the seminal theoretical works on limited war.

Chapter II

LIMITATION AND ESCALATION: UNILATERALISM VERSUS INTERACTION IN AMERICAN LIMITED WAR LITERATURE

By the late 1950's the criticisms of the Eisenhower Administration's defence policy had come to be widely accepted within the academic community. The limited war literature of the earlier part of the decade had successfully communicated its principal theme of the need to reorient American thinking about the relationship between force and politics. Not only did the theoretical arguments against the strategy of massive retaliation appear convincing, practical experience also demonstrated the bankruptcy of the strategy in providing for containment at the periphery. The Dien Bien Phu crisis of 1954 displayed the difficulty of applying the concept of asymmetrical response to a peripheral security problem. The idea of using American air resources to conduct a massive bombing campaign around the perimeter of the besieged Dien Bien Phu was considered and ruled out. In the end the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu and the problem of insecurity in Southeast Asia was not eliminated. The strategy of asymmetrical response that was supposed to return the initiative to the United States had in fact achieved precisely the opposite. The threat to use excessive force to deter or to respond to actual challenges, as Bernard Brodie had argued in the early 1950's, could only be made to safeguard the most central security values of the United States. A strategy of massive retaliation applied to peripheral

security threat only served to render the United States impotent. As the limited war advocates had been arguing for several years, the realities of the nuclear environment required different strategies for the protection of vital and peripheral values. The limited war theorists offered a strategy based on the idea of responding symmetrically to security threats so that peripheral challenges could be addressed, and most importantly, be addressed in a fashion that prevented an unnecessary and unwarranted risk of nuclear war. This concept of force application was by no means a new one. The same idea of calibrating the application of force to the type of threat being countered had been made in NSC-68 in 1950. Frustration with the Korean experience, however, pushed these types of ideas out of the forum of strategic discussion. The limited war theorists never lost sight of both the lessons of Korea and the idea of proportional force as the only credible method of deterring or fighting a peripheral conflict. By the latter half of the 1950's the arguments in favor of developing a limited war strategy were overwhelming, and attention turned from the initial problem of convincing the strategic community of the need for a limited war strategy to the more complicated problem of devising a body of theory upon which the strategy of limited war could be based.

The principle theoretical themes which lay at the centre of the concept of limited war were the interrelated issues of limitation and escalation in conflict. This chapter will be devoted to an analysis of the concepts of limitation and escalation as they apply to American limited war strategy. The chapter will begin with a review of the spe-

cific aspects of Clausewitzian theory that relate to limitation and escalation in conflict. The purpose of this is to provide a basis for comparison between Clausewitzian and American concepts of limitation and escalation. The importance of making a comparison between Clausewitzian concepts of limitation and escalation and those contained in the limited war literature has to do with the assertion that the so-called American way of war is anti-Clausewitzian in nature. This, of course, was a charge that the limited war theorists made in their advocacy of the strategy of limited war as the only sensible solution to the security problems facing the United States in the post-war era. The critical focus of the comparison between Clausewitz and the limited war theorists is whether the characterization of the dynamics of limitation and escalation in the limited war literature conforms to Clausewitzian principles.

The chapter will begin with an analysis of Clausewitzian theory and the concepts of limitation and escalation. It will be argued in this section that two pivotal ideas can be derived from Clausewitz's discussion of limitation and escalation; first, that limitation in war is the result of the desire to seek limited political objectives, and secondly, that the relationship between adversaries in a conflict, and the dynamics of limitation and escalation between them, are

interactive processes. The second section of the chapter will be devoted to an analysis of the limited war literature of the late 1950's and early 1960's. It will be argued in this analysis that two models of limited war and the concepts of limitation and escalation in conflict are evident in the limited war literature. Furthermore, it

will be argued that while both models of limitation and escalation display some congruence with Clausewitzian theory, one of the models represents the expression of the traditional American concept of force application in a modified form that reflects the peculiarities of the nuclear environment. Finally, it will be argued that the model of limited war that represented the traditional American approach to conflict was favored over the alternative model precisely because of its reflection of historical American values.

In discussing the patterns of conflict Clausewitz did not use the modern phraseology of limitation and escalation as do contemporary strategists. Despite this Clausewitz nonetheless did offer some important points about conflict which can serve as a basis for the discussion of the modern notions of limitation and escalation. In Book One Clausewitz developed the concept of extremes in warfare which in contemporary terms describe the tendency for conflict to escalate. The first extreme had to do with the maximum exertion of force in war; "...war is an act of force, and there is no logical limit to the application of force. Each side therefore compels its opponent to follow suit; a reciprocal action is started which must lead, in theory, to extremes."¹ The second extreme related to the fundamental aim of war, that of defeating the enemy;

The ultimate aim of war must be taken as applying to both sides. Once there is interaction, so long as I have not overthrown my opponent I am bound to fear he may overthrow me. Thus I am not in control; he dictates to me as much as I dictate to him.²

¹ Clausewitz, Carl Von, On War, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1984 p. 77.

² Ibid., p. 77.

The third extreme had to do with what Clausewitz referred to as the "maximum exertion of strength";

If you want to overcome your enemy you must match your effort against his power of resistance, which can be expressed as the product of two inseparable factors, viz. the total means at his disposal and the strength of his will. The extent of the means at his disposal is a matter - though not exclusively - of figures, and should be measurable. But the strength of his will can only be gauged approximately by the strength of the motive animating it. Assuming that you can arrive in this way at a reasonably accurate estimate of the enemy's power of resistance, you can adjust your own efforts accordingly; that is, you can increase them until they surpass the enemy's or, if this is beyond your means, you can make your effort as great as possible. But the enemy will do the same; competition will again result and, in pure theory, it must again force you to extremes.³

Although the discussion of the three extremes is purely theoretical, two important practical points are conveyed. In the first case the process by which the escalation of conflict occurs is interactive in nature. In each case the level of violence at which the conflict is conducted is the sum of the interplay of two adversaries locked in battle. In Clausewitz's concept of escalation, to use the modern term, the continued expansion of the conflict could not occur if only one party increased its efforts. In such a situation the state which alone escalated would achieve victory over the opponent. The second important point to draw from Clausewitz's theoretical discussion is that neither of the parties is in complete control of the level of violence to which the conflict moves or comes to rest. The implication of this is that escalation cannot be controlled unilaterally by one party to the conflict. Limitation and escalation, therefore, is contingent upon the action and reaction of both conflicting states.

³ Ibid., p. 77.

As Clausewitz was careful to point out, the tendency for conflict to gravitate to the extremes as a matter of course occurs only in an abstract theoretical sense. In "real war" restraining factors would prevent the conflict from unalterably reaching its theoretical extreme. Two restraining factors can be readily identified; friction in war, and, secondly, the influence of politics. The role of friction as a restraining factor can be dealt with easily.

The concept of friction, as Clausewitz remarked, is that which distinguishes "real" war from war on paper.⁴ War on paper, or theoretical war to use a better term, can be planned for and executed in the mind of the strategist with comparative ease.⁵ Because of the relative simplicity of theoretical planning which, even if the problem of friction is considered, cannot concretely identify or measure the effect of friction, intricate operational planning is ill-advised. It has often been stressed as a maxim that a good plan for war is revealed by its simplicity rather than its complexity. Despite Clausewitz's abhorrence of maxims, the rationale for simplicity is well supported by the effects of friction in war. As Clausewitz stated; "(e)verything in war is simple, but the simplest thing is difficult.⁶ For example, without considering the potential difficulties that would attend the movement of an entire army, the simple administrative move of a regi-

⁴ Ibid., p. 119.

⁵ One could use the Schlieffen Plan as a good example of what in theory is not complicated, but in reality far from simple. If all aspects of the Schlieffen Plan on paper translated easily into actual operations, the Germans would have succeeded. The effect of friction is that it will often profoundly alter the achievement of what has been planned for.

⁶ Ibid., p. ?.

ment or a brigade could be thwarted by any number of problems. Such a straightforward move could go completely awry because of a failure in communications, a shortage of fuel, weather conditions, a navigational error, or the unexpected loss of a key bridge. None of these simple, yet common, occurrences brings into the equation the role of the enemy who consciously desires to obstruct one's movement and, therefore, introduces additional friction that for the most part is incalculable. If one considers the effect of friction in the conduct of an entire campaign, even the simplest plan when executed is likely to be a difficult and complicated task at best.

Friction will therefore exert a considerable unintended restraint on the tendency of war to evolve to the theoretical extreme. Even if both adversaries do not desire a political settlement and wish to prosecute the conflict to the fullest extent possible, friction will affect the intended escalation. The specific nature of the friction will determine whether escalation is merely delayed or entirely impeded. In this respect Clausewitz's concept of friction acts as a limiting factor in conflict. It is important, however, to remain aware that the role of friction in conflict as a limiting factor is an unintended one. A more important and intentional restraint is that which is imposed by politics.

Given Clausewitz's dictum that war is nothing but the continuation of politics by other means, politics plays a critical role in the scope of conflict. If the proper relationship between the use of force and political objectives is maintained, politics will act as a restraint on war and will prevent it from reaching the theoretical

extreme. If, in a dispute between two states, a political purpose is served by the use of force, it does not necessarily hold that the total defeat of the enemy is sensible as well.

Since war is not an act of senseless passion but is controlled by its political object, the value of this object must determine the sacrifices made for it in magnitude and also in duration. Once the expenditure exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace must follow.⁷

The necessity of the political object mitigating the scope of a conflict will thus act as a limitation and thereby prevent the escalation of the conflict to the theoretical extreme.

The restraining influence of politics on the scope of warfare led Clausewitz to identify a form of conflict he called "war for the limited aim".⁸ This type of warfare could either be offensive or defensive, but in either case the total defeat of the enemy was not the objective. In offensive war for the limited aim, the object was to take a portion of the enemy's territory so that at the peace negotiation it can be retained or traded for another value.⁹ In defensive war for the limited aim, the object was to keep the remainder of one's territory intact at a minimum, or to defend it until it was possible to take up the offensive and regain losses. In both of these forms of limited war, politics restrains the objectives sought. Thus politics acts on the one hand to limit escalation and on the other determine to what extent escalation should rationally be used to attain the political objective.

⁷ Ibid., p. 92.

⁸ Ibid., Book 8, Chapters 5-8.

⁹ Ibid., p. 611.

In concluding on the relevance of Clausewitz on limitation and escalation several points can be made. In an analysis of the concept of extremes, which today we refer to as conflict escalation, Clausewitz argued that the process was interactive in nature. Continued escalation is impossible, given Clausewitz's approach to the concept, if one's adversary does not react and do the same. It follows logically from this that in a conflict where escalation is occurring, its interactive nature makes unilateral control of the escalation process impossible. If escalation in a conflict is to be controlled in order that the effort expended and the costs incurred be commensurate with the political objectives of the conflict, adversaries must interact with one another. The idea that one adversary can dictate to the other is a contradiction of the Clausewitzian concept of the nature of war and the relationship between the parties to a conflict.

The second important conclusion is that in the Clausewitzian conception of limited war, conflict is limited by the political objectives that are sought, and not in the amount of force that is applied to achieve political ends. This perspective of limited war has ramifications for escalation as well. If the problem of limitation relates only to the issue of defining the political objectives of a given conflict, then escalation, theoretically speaking, is not problematic in limited warfare. This assertion can be derived from the logical extension of Clausewitzian thinking. If force strictly remains an instrument of political purpose, escalation control is a direct result of limited political objectives. Clearly defined limited objectives will have the effect of inducing a "natural limit". In

theory, every possible political objective has a natural limit that is endogenous to it, that is, a limit that will be naturally induced with the imposition of that political objective. Under these circumstances, therefore, escalation does not present a substantial problem in limited warfare where the limiting "mechanism" is the political objective of the conflict. If one leaves the realm of the theoretical and moves to the real world however, the problem of escalation is less straightforward. In the real world the process of defining political objectives and limits in the context of an adversarial relationship is fraught with complications. It is unlikely to be the case that the act of defining limited political objectives for oneself, let alone assuring that the enemy understands and agrees with them explicitly, will be a matter of routine. Nevertheless, the theoretical relationship between the mechanism of limitation and the salience of escalation in limited war is still significant. If, As Clausewitz suggested, limited war is about the pursuit of limited political objectives there will exist the tendency for some form of natural limit to impose itself on conflict.

Having made some distinctions with regard to Clausewitz and the concepts of limitation and escalation, it remains to discuss and analyze the limited war literature of the 1950's with respect to these central concepts in limited war theory. The first point that must be made is that for most of the the initial phase of limited war literature the process of limitation and escalation was not a primary focus.

The development of a scholarly literature on limited conflict

occurred only after the Korean war.¹⁰ During the the first phase of work the primary concern was almost exclusively about the reorientation of American defence thinking. Much of the early pieces on the subject focused on the Eisenhower "new look" defence policy in relation to the challenges of the time, and with regard to these, the necessity of developing a limited war strategy.¹¹ Before the narrower and more problematic issue of limitation and escalation in conflict could be addressed, the transformation of American thinking about the relationship between force and politics took precedence. The literature did discuss limitation and escalation, but from the perspective of the necessity of invoking the former and avoiding the latter rather than a detailed analysis of the dynamic processes involved.

As the decade of the 1950's unfolded, the criticisms of the "New Look" policy and its attendant strategy for peripheral conflict gained wider acceptance. As a result of this, attention turned to the development of a theory of limited war with a focus on the problem of limitation and escalation. The problem of limitation and escalation in warfare took on new dimensions in the nuclear age. It could be argued persuasively that one of the most dramatic repercussions of nuclear weapons was that they had the potential to bring warfare closer to the absolute form conceived by Clausewitz. Whereas for Clausewitz abso-

¹⁰ Halperin, Morton H., Limited War: An Essay on the Development of the Theory and an annotated Bibliography, AMS Press, New York, 1962 p. 2.

¹¹ See: Acheson, Dean, Power and Diplomacy, Harvard Univesity Press, 1958; Bowles, Chester, "Our Present Foreign Policy", Commonweal, LX, April 30 1954, pp. 86-95; Brodie, Bernard, "Unlimited Weapons and limited War", The Reporter, XI, November 18 1954, pp. 16-21; "The Dulles Doctrine: Instant Retaliation", New Republic, CXXX, March 29 1954, pp. 10-14, Statements by various prominent analysts criticizing the strategy of massive retaliation.

lute war, in which all available destructive power was directed toward the objective of the conflict, was only a theoretical model used to help define what war was in reality, for modern strategists something approximating absolute war was the potential result of warfare in the nuclear age. If force was to be used for political purposes military strategy in the nuclear environment had to come to terms with the problems of limitation and escalation in conflict. A failure to solve the problem of limitation and escalation would lead to one of two results; either force would be rendered obsolete in the pursuit of national political objectives, or the use of force would in all probability lead to the complete destruction of the nations at war.

There were two interconnected issues with respect to limitation; first, the matter of what form the limits could take, and, secondly, the actual process of arriving at and sustaining limits in conflict. The effective control of escalation was obviously integral to the latter issue. The question as to what form the limits could take was the easier of the two problems to solve, but was also necessary to settle first. Until it was clear what should be avoided it would be impossible to investigate the process of limitation and escalation.¹² Identifying the forms of limitation and the rationale for them posed no great difficulty. It was obvious, for example, that the geographic scope of a conflict could comprise an effective limitation.¹³ In fact, given the vast destructive capabilities of the United States and the Soviet Union, it was thought imperative to contain conflict geographi-

¹² Kaufmann, William W., Military Policy and National Strategy, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1956 p. 108.

¹³ See: Bjorklund, E., "Can War Be Limited?", Air Power, VI, Summer 1959, pp. 287-297.

cally in order that general war be avoided. If hostilities between East and West expanded geographically, and in doing so, directly threatened the security of the United States or the Soviet Union the potential for the conflict to escalate to the level of total war would be high, if not guaranteed.¹⁴ The argument for geographic limitation was not novel in the early 1950's. American thinking in Korea was that the expansion of the conflict into Chinese territory would mean an overall expansion of the conflict in general. Consequently, both logic and experience appeared to underscore the importance of geography as one of the fundamental forms of limitation that could be invoked in a conflict.

A second form of limitation was that of weapons. It is important to note that this limitation was not initially accepted as necessary by all analysts.¹⁵ For example, William Kaufmann argued vociferously that nuclear weapons should not be used because by their very nature were inconsistent with limitation in conflict. This was due in part to the psychological effect of employing such weapons; it was due also to their effect on the battlefield as well. Even if one's objectives were limited and the use of nuclear weapons was not intended to

¹⁴ Osgood, Robert E., Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy, University of Chicago Press, 1957 p. 243-44.

¹⁵ See: Buzzard, Anthony, et al., "On Limiting Atomic War", Royal United Services Institute, London, 1956, suggests that tactical nuclear weapons can be used in limited war; Dulles, John Foster, "Challenge and Response in United States Strategy", Foreign Affairs, XXXIV, October 1957, pp. 25-43, suggests use of tactical weapons as an alternative to massive retaliation; Greathouse, Ronald H. Second Lieutenant, "Profile of a Dilemma: Limited Nuclear War", Marine Corps Gazette, XLIII, January 1959, pp. 24-26; Slesor, John C., "Great Deterrent and Its Limitations", Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, XII, May 1956, pp. 140-146; Teller, Edward, "Alternatives for Security", Foreign Affairs, XXXVI, January 1958, pp. 201-208.

change the scope of the conflict, would the enemy recognize this? Aside from the psychological ramifications of the use of nuclear weapons, their use would alter the character of the battle so quickly and so drastically that it would likely lead the enemy to conclude that the scope of the conflict had changed and that his only course was to retaliate in kind.¹⁶ Such a development would contradict two important goals of limited conflict; the initiation and maintenance of limits, and the avoidance of escalation. Kaufmann argued that weapons must possess certain characteristics to be consistent with a strategy of limited warfare;

(t)hey should be able to perform their mission effectively within a limited area; they should permit of discriminating and precise employment; and they should be accepted as normal and conventional to the occasion. The forces that meet these standards to a preeminent degree are the infantry and their support weapons, and the tactical airforces.¹⁷

The implication of Kaufmann's argument was that the non-use of nuclear weapons represented a "natural" and necessary form of limitation in conflict if total war was to be avoided.¹⁸

Henry Kissinger, although he later changed his views, argued on the contrary that the use of nuclear weapons was not inconsistent with a strategy of limited warfare. This assertion grew out of some specific assumptions about the nature of the limiting process itself.¹⁹ The

¹⁶ Kaufmann, Military Policy and National Strategy, p. 108.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁸ See: Church, A.T. jr., "Deterrence and Delusion", Orbis, III, Summer 1959, pp. 141-153; King, James E. jr., "Nuclear Plenty and Limited War", Foreign Affairs, XXXV, January 1957, pp. 238-256; Wohlstetter, Albert, "The Delicate Balance of Terror", Foreign Affairs, XXXVII, January 1959, pp. 211-234.

¹⁹ See Kissinger, Henry A., Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1957 Chapter 6.

issue of the dynamics of the limitation and escalation process will be dealt with subsequently. For the moment, however, the discussion will remain focused on the forms of limitation. Despite Kissinger's original argument with regard to the use of nuclear weapons, he, along with others, suggested that another form of limitation was the types of targets that were engaged in a conflict.²⁰

The argument regarding target-type was simple. Potential targets in a conflict ranged from military targets in the battle zone (troops, equipment, and supplies), military targets beyond the battlefield area (reserve troops, supplies, and supply lines), military targets on enemy soil, and finally, the civilian targets of the enemy. It would be obvious that mutual restraint in engaging targets beyond the battle zone up this rough scale of value would comprise a limitation of the conflict. Conversely, the engagement of target-types beyond the battle zone after initial restraint would represent the escalation of the conflict. The various forms that limitation could take were easier to identify and explain than the more complex process of limitation and escalation in conflict. The theoretical challenge presented by the problem of attaining and maintaining limits in conflict would require the identification of the dynamic process of limitation and escalation and an understanding of how it functioned between adversaries in battle.

Within the second phase of the limited war literature which sought to refine the theoretical aspects of the strategy, two streams of thought on the "mechanism" of limitation emerged. Each of the streams

²⁰ See: Fisher, Thomas L., "Limited War - What Is It?", Air University Quarterly Review, IX, Winter 1957-58, pp. 127-142.

in the literature took a fundamentally different view of what the mechanism of limitation was in a limited conflict. As well, each stream was represented by some major limited war theorists.²¹ One view of limitation in conflict was advanced by Henry Kissinger and Robert Osgood. Conflict in the nuclear age would remain limited, they argued, because the adversaries in conflict would mutually recognize the limited objectives involved in the dispute.²² Kissinger suggested that,

(a) limited war among the major powers is kept limited by the conscious choice of the protagonists.... The restraint which keeps war limited is a psychological one: the consequences of a limited victory or a limited defeat or a stalemate - the three possible outcomes of a limited war - must seem preferable to the consequences of an all-out war.²³

Osgood made precisely the same argument in suggesting that although the belligerents would be capable of much higher levels of violence, because the objectives of both would be limited, escalation to such levels would be precluded.²⁴ In this respect the Kissinger/Osgood perspective on the mechanism of limitation was consistent with what Clausewitz argued should be the case; that politics would determine the conduct of conflict. In spite of this initial similarity, it is important to recognize that the proponents of the Kissinger/Osgood model of limited war went beyond the argument that political objectives were the mechanism of limitation to suggest that a relationship

²¹ Halperin Limited War, pp. 9-10.

²² See: Baldwin, Hanson W., "Limited War", The Atlantic, CCIII, May 1959, pp. 35-43; Halle Louis J., Choice For Survival, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1958; Saundby, Air Marshal Sir Robert, "The Doctrine of Proportional Force", Military Review, XXXVII, October 1957, pp. 84-89.

²³ Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, p. 168.

²⁴ Osgood, Limited War, p. 238.

between objectives and the type or amount of force existed also. This was not a Clausewitzian concept. For Clausewitz, the limitation of conflict was purely a matter of the limitation of the objectives sought in war, not how much or what type of force was used to achieve the political objective. The idea of force calibration, where the amount of force used would be related to the nature of the objectives of the conflict, was very much a product of the nuclear age. Its roots in American thinking can be traced back to NSC-68 and dominated the theoretical literature on limited war.

The opposing view of the mechanism of limitation was argued by Thomas C. Schelling and Bernard Brodie. It was their conviction that conflict would remain limited not because the objectives were limited, but rather, because neither side was prepared to use the maximum force at their disposal.²⁵ In a response to Osgood's definition of limited war, Schelling made the following criticism;

This definition misses the most important point about limited war, namely that a limited war in which we are involved is unlikely to have limited objectives.... While it was true in Korea, and may be true in any limited war, that the immediate military goals that meet our objectives can be limited and concrete, it has to be emphasized that what we are fighting about in a limited war is usually the Western position vis-a-vis the Soviet bloc, and nothing more limited than that.²⁶

²⁵ Halperin, Limited War, p. 9 Also see: Aron, Raymond, "A Half-Century of Limited War", Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, XII, April 1956, pp. 99-104.

²⁶ Schelling, Thomas C., "Limited War", from a lecture delivered to the National War College, November 18, 1959, mimeographed by Harvard University, Center for International Affairs. (cited from Halperin's annotated bibliography on limited war)

Bernard Brodie's concept of limited war in the modern era also focused on means as the mechanism of limitation. Limited war was not an entirely new phenomenon, Brodie argued, but had a markedly different form in the nuclear environment. Wars in the past were limited by the very inability to mobilize resources and technology and, consequently, the level of violence and degree of damage to societies was also limited. By contrast, the modern limited war differed from its historical counterpart by the conscious restraint of the resources and technology that were available.²⁷ The Schelling/Brodie model of limitation was obviously in no way related to Clausewitzian thinking on limitation. The vast destructive potential of nuclear weapons was unimaginable in Clausewitz's time and, consequently, the extraordinary concern over the limitation of means was not a factor that he would have considered relevant. The friction that Clausewitz argued prevented war from reaching its absolute was, in a sense, by-passed by nuclear weapons. Something very close to the theoretical abstraction of absolute war was possible with nuclear weapons.

The divergence between the two approaches represented by Kissinger/Osgood and Schelling/Brodie centred on the matter of ends versus means as the limiting agent. It is very important, however, to recognize that the differing approaches were not merely a matter of intellectual semantics. The implications of adopting one or the other view were substantial. It could be argued persuasively that the degree of salience that limitation and escalation would hold in conflict varied with each approach. With the Kissinger/Osgood perspective the process of

²⁷ Brodie, Bernard, Strategy in the Missile Age, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1959 pp. 310-311.

arriving at and sustaining limits, and therefore the issue of escalation as well, was less problematic. The assertion simply stated is this; if limitation is the function of political objectives, then, in the existence of explicitly stated and mutually recognized limited political objectives,, the restraints required in a conflict become more or less self-evident.

This point can be well illustrated by referring back to Clausewitz. Clausewitz's conception of limited war stressed that the essential limitation was the political objective sought, and in this respect the Kissinger/Osgood model has something in common with the Clausewitzian approach. In Clausewitzian limited war, the objectives were limited in that what was sought was only the defence or acquisition of a particular piece of territory. The territory might be the objective for its own sake, or as a bargaining chip in negotiations. The important point, however, is that the nature of the objective naturally induces the critical limitation (the "natural limit") in the conflict. Geography becomes a natural limit that defines the scope of conflict. Movement beyond the territorial limit would be inconsistent with the political objectives that drive the dispute. Political objectives, recalling an earlier point concerning Clausewitz, therefore prevent the conflict from escalating to the extreme. In this way, if one assumes that objectives are the mechanism of limitation, the definition of the essential limits of conflict is not problematic. As well, if limited political objectives are mutually recognized and adhered to, escalation which does not threaten the natural limit(s) of the conflict is also of less salience. These conclusions are the product

of deductively taking Clausewitzian theory to its logical end. Since the Kissinger/Osgood model makes the same assumption on the mechanism of limitation, these conclusions hold for it as well.²⁸ Korea provides an excellent example of this line of argument.²⁹ If the American objective was to defend South Korea and the communist objective was to take it - and these objectives were explicit, not subject to change, and mutually recognized - the naturally induced natural limit would be geographical. At the minimum the geographical limit would be the engagement area of the two armed forces at the border or, at the maximum, the Korean peninsula. One of these two limits would be adhered to and constitute a stable aspect of the conflict.³⁰ In theory, therefore, escalation which does not cross or threaten the stable geographical limit would not necessarily be destabilizing in the sense that it would naturally raise the spectre of all-out war. This perspective on escalation has implications for other forms of limitation, specifically weapons restraint.

If the assumptions of the Korea example are accepted, the use of nuclear weapons are not necessarily inconsistent with a limited war strategy. This was in fact the essence of the argument made by Kis-

²⁸ Kissinger made the point that limited political objectives produced natural limits, both geographical and of the means employed. (See Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, p. 140 and p. 168)

²⁹ The literature being discussed did not exist during the Korean war, however, it can be argued convincingly that the Kissinger/Osgood assumption that objectives made war limited was the dominant paradigm in Korea. Although means were consciously limited, the interpretation of communist designs in Korea (that of a diversion) led to an overwhelming tendency to view Korea as limited by the objectives sought.

³⁰ In fact, during the Korean war the peninsula did become a stable limit in the conflict recognized by both sides.

singer and Osgood. In "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy", the forms of limitation on which Kissinger focused were primarily geographic and target-type. The use of nuclear weapons, according to Kissinger, did not naturally mean a shift from limited war to total conflict providing certain conditions were met:

(a)ssuming...that both sides are eager to avoid an all-out war - prerequisites for any kind of limitation - there exists some "built in" limitations which can form the basis for self-restraint. As long as both sides retain a retaliatory force capable of devastating the opponent, they will not look for an excuse to expand the war.³¹

Osgood also suggested that weapons as a form of limitation was not necessary, or that if nuclear weapons were used, was uncontrolled escalation a foregone conclusion;

it would be a mistake to assume that there is a mathematical correlation between the destructiveness or the firepower of weapons and the scale or scope of warfare. The effect that the use of certain weapons exerts on the dimensions of warfare depends largely upon the seriousness with which the enemy regards the resulting threat to national values. The careful limitation and clarification of objectives can go far to keep that threat ordinate, even when the most powerful weapons are employed. Therefore, there is nothing inherent in a wide range of atomic weapons that renders them incompatible with limited war, apart from the targets toward which they are directed and the political context in which they are employed.³²

The problem of limitation and escalation takes on a different salience, however, if one considers the Schelling/Brodie model. If, as Schelling argued, the peripheral conflicts in which the United States might find itself represented challenges to the Western security position, the political objectives at stake may not be limited. If this was the case, the mechanism of limitation would not be the ends pur-

³¹ Ibid., p. 186.

³² Osgood, Limited War, p. 248.

sued, but the means applied to achieve those ends. The implication of the change in the limiting mechanism is significant. Without explicitly limited objectives the natural limits of a conflict are less self-evident. In fact, one could argue, a change in limiting mechanism may lead to a situation where no natural limit can be identified. This is so because in a situation where objectives at best are unclear, or worse are explicitly without limit, the emergence of natural restraints that will dominate the conflict is far more tentative than when objectives are clearly defined and clearly limited.

Brodie criticized the definition of limited war as being "the pursuit of limited objectives" because, in his mind, it distorted the character of the relationship between ends and means. This distortion would lead to a mistaken view that means could be easily limited if ends were explicitly and mutually limited by adversaries in conflict. Brodie objected to the simplicity of the relationship;

(u)nfortunately...even in peripheral areas limited war is not going to be as easy to arrange as that. We shall have to work very hard to keep it limited.³³

The fact that limits would not be easily achieved meant, under the assumptions of the Schelling/Brodie model, that limitation and escalation would comprise a central problem in conflict. If limitation was a function of the desire to avoid the use of total force, weapon type could quite easily emerge as an initial limit. The problem which arises under the "limited war as limited means" scenario, however, is that if the objectives are wide in scope the stability of the weapons limit is questionable. In a conflict where ends are substantial,

³³ Brodie, Bernard, The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1946 p. 312.

escalation becomes more profitable and therefore more probable.³⁴ The essential point is that under the assumptions of the Schelling/Brodie model limitation is less natural and stable and, consequently, escalation more problematic. In this respect the Schelling/Brodie model diverges from the popular notion that there is a distinct and easily manageable relationship between ends and means. This idea was evident in NSC-68 and was certainly contained in the Kissinger/Osgood approach to limitation. A second implication of the Schelling/Brodie model was that if limits were to be found and sustained in a conflict, the process of limitation would necessarily be an interactive one. This point raises a second area of divergence between the two approaches to limitation and escalation in conflict.

Between two adversaries the process of limitation and escalation could in theory be either unilateral or interactive in nature. It can be argued convincingly that the two models of limitation and escalation tend to represent a different type of relationship between adversaries with regard to the process of limitation and escalation.³⁵ The argument is that the approach which sees limited war as the outcome of limited ends is conducive to a unilateralist process of conflict management.

³⁴ For further arguments about the difficulty of limitation under the assumptions of the Schelling/Brodie model regarding the nature of objectives, see: Biorklund, "Can War Be Limited?"; Blackett, P.M.S. et al., On Limiting Atomic War, Royal United Institute of International Affairs, London, 1956.

³⁵ A qualification must be made on this point with respect to Robert Osgood. Although he agreed with Kissinger that limits were a function of ends, he tended to argue for an interactive adversarial relationship as it related to the process of limitation and escalation.

A tendency toward unilateralism in the context of a limited war strategy is not surprising considering American military experience.³⁶ Although Osgood did not reflect a unilateralist bias, he did argue that limited war was an "un-American" activity.³⁷ As suggested in chapter 1, U.S. historical experience had a profound effect on American thinking about military conflict. The predilection to define both security and its protection as absolutes resulted in a tendency to set total objectives and to dictate the outcome of conflict. After Hiroshima, total war was politically unacceptable, and this brought the traditional American approach to conflict and the imperatives of the nuclear age into disharmony. The limited war strategists were deeply conscious of this fact and argued that the traditional approach had to be discarded. To the extent that limited war strategy stressed the need to relate the use of force to political objectives, some adjustment of America's traditional approach to war was realized. However, the unilateralist model of limited war nonetheless managed to continue to reflect a particular aspect of the American way of war. In essence, it was the American nature to want to dictate the "rules" of

³⁶ George, Alexander, "American Policy-Making and the North Korean Aggression", World Politics, VII, January 1955 pp. 209-232.

George's article examines American policy in Korea and concludes that policy-makers failed to take into account the reaction of the North Koreans to U.S. decisions. American policy-makers, by not considering the enemy and his role in the conflict, succumbed to a form of unilateralism. The conflict was not viewed as an interactive process where action, reaction, and counter-reaction must be analyzed in the decision-making effort. Decisions were made on the basis of American interests and perceptions of the conflict. Since Korea was seen to be the first example of the limitation of war, and therefore acted as an impetus to the creation of a limited war literature, the unilateralism which it displayed had an effect on subsequent American thinking.

³⁷ Osgood, Limited War, Chapter 2.

conflict to the adversary. This desire to control the enemy and the terms of conflict reflected the unilateralist model of limited war. The unilateralist model allowed the non-interactive strategy of escalation dominance to be utilized. While this method of escalation was not consistent with Clausewitzian principles, it was consistent with the American way of war. This assertion is best illustrated by analyzing the implications for conflict escalation under the conditions of the unilateralist model of limited war.

If explicitly defined limited objectives existed in a given conflict the natural limits of the conflict provide a determined range of escalation where unilateral action is possible and perhaps even desirable. Victory within mutually observed limits could be best assured by dominating the escalation process. To achieve escalation dominance in the context of a limited war strategy would put one adversary in the position of dictating the rules of the conflict to the other. The desire to achieve such a military status and thereby impose the terms of conflict and its termination on the adversary was explicitly presented in some of the limited war literature. In seeking to prevail in a limited conflict, William Kaufmann argued that the enemy must be convinced of several things; that he could not achieve his objectives by the means currently employed; that he could not achieve his objectives by expanding the war; and that at any point in the contest the cost of fighting to him is greater than to the United States.³⁸ No simpler definition of escalation dominance can be made.³⁹ If the con-

³⁸ Kaufmann, Military Policy and National Strategy, p. 113.

³⁹ Rathjens, George W. jr., "Notes on the Military Problems of Europe", World Politics, X, January 1958 pp. 182-201.

ditions that Kaufmann outlined were achieved, the logical response of the adversary would be to immediately enter negotiation since, in light of his limited objectives, continuation of the conflict would be senseless. The important point is that his conclusion to seek a political settlement is not the product of interaction, but rather, the result of his lack of input into the conflict that the adversary's dominance prevents.

If, on the other hand, one considers the unilateral process of escalation dominance in the context of the interactive model, very different conclusions are drawn. While escalation dominance might be the superior strategy when limitation is the function of objectives, it would be a disastrous strategy if limitation is the function of the means available to the adversaries. If the latter view of limitation is operative, the attempt by one party to achieve escalation dominance will unavoidably cause his opponent to follow suit. This is likely because under the assumptions of the interactive model of limitation, objectives might well be total. Thus escalation by one side that crossed critical thresholds will be responded to in kind by the opponent. In this respect the unilateralism that appears to be a potential outgrowth of the "limited war as limited objectives" approach is entirely inappropriate for the alternative view of limitation.

Rathjens argued that if limited war was to be possible the United States must possess the military capability to outdo the opponent at any level of violence. Thus, escalation dominance was not simply a desirable military condition, but a necessary one for the whole strategy of limited war to succeed.

If limitation is the function of two adversaries desiring and agreeing that a conflict be prosecuted without the resort to the total means available, then the process of limitation and escalation in conflict must be interactive. Both parties to a conflict must interact and communicate either explicitly or tacitly for limitation to be achieved and for escalation to be avoided. It becomes evident that under the assumptions of the interactive model the relationship between adversaries and the process of limitation and escalation are both more critical and complex.

The nature of the relationship between adversaries is of paramount concern in the search for the control of conflict. Anatol Rapoport, in his book, "Fights, Games, and Debates", offered some distinctions about conflict and the relationship of opponents that are useful. Rapoport identified three "modes" of conflict in which the significance of the opponent, and therefore the relationship between them, differed with important implications.⁴⁰ In a "fight" the nature of the conflict is of mortal proportions where it is difficult to put the positions of the adversaries into words or clearly defined categories. A "game" is also a form of conflict, but of a very different type; "(t)he starting point is not disagreement, but on the contrary an agreement, namely an agreement to strive for incompatible goals within the restraints of certain rules."⁴¹ A "debate" is different from both "fights" and "games". A "debate" is a clash of convictions about what is or should be, and is the attempt to prevail on those terms.

⁴⁰ Rapoport, Anatol, Fights, Games, and Debates, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1961 See Introduction "Three Modes of Conflict" pp. 1-12.

⁴¹ Ibid., viii.

Within each of these "modes" of conflict the meaning of the opponent, or put another way, the relationship between them, is varied. In a "fight" the opponent is merely an obstacle to be overcome with whatever means necessary. In a "game" the opponent is a necessity, there can be no contest without him. The object is, within the rules of the conflict, to prevent him from achieving his objective by achieving one's own. In a "debate" neither harming the opponent (fight) or outwitting him (game) is the objective. The purpose of the "debate" is to convince him of your position.⁴²

Rapoport's three modes of conflict can be applied to the post-war struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, but also more narrowly to the two models of limitation as well. It could be argued easily that the "fight" mode of conflict is totally inappropriate for the nuclear age. The whole dilemma of the post-war contest between East and West has been that, despite their incompatibility, total conflict which had the potential to destroy both of them had to be avoided at all costs. Total conflict of this variety would mean the destruction of both. Victory in general nuclear conflict was impossible. What military strategy sought to do at both the nuclear and conventional level was to avoid general war, but allow for the continued pursuit of national interests that might require the use of military force. In such an environment one is left with either the "game" or the "debate" form of conflict.

⁴² Ibid., p. 9.

Rapoport's "game" and "debate" modes of conflict have some general similarities with the two models of limitation. For example, the "debate" form of conflict can be related to the "limited war as limited objectives" school in that they both contain a potential for unilateralism. As the object of the "debate" is to disabuse the opponent of his position and persuade him of the validity or necessity of one's own, unilateralism could easily be used. One might in the course of the debate take the opponent's view into account, but it is not absolutely required. If escalation within the natural limit(s) defined by the objectives of the conflict is operating in the dispute, escalation dominance may be highly attractive as a strategy. The rules of the conflict in the "debate" mode of conflict are therefore susceptible to unilateralism. Kissinger's view on the purpose of limited war strategy lends support to this argument.

Kissinger was of the opinion that the primary purpose of a strategy of limited war was to strengthen deterrence. Its secondary purpose was to provide a strategy of conflict that could effectively serve national purposes if deterrence failed, but, most importantly, in a way which avoided total conflict.⁴³ It could be argued that the type of deterrence Kissinger was searching for through limited war strategy was consistent with a unilateralist approach to limited conflict. It was an attempt through declared strategy to deter the opponent from

⁴³ Kissinger, Henry A., The Necessity For Change: Prospects of American Foreign Policy, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1961 p. 59.

See also: Craig, Gordon A., "The Problem of Limited War", Commentary XXV, February 1958 pp. 171-174 (a review of Kissinger's "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy" in which Craig is critical of Kissinger's concept of limited nuclear war, but is in full agreement that the purpose of limited war strategy is to act as a deterrent.); Blackett, et al., "On Limiting Atomic War".

his contemplated challenge before the outbreak of actual hostilities. The rules of the debate about the use of peripheral conflict and its solutions would be imposed by the United States in two ways; first by deterrence through the doctrine of limited war, and, failing that, through the exercise of escalation dominance in conflict.

The "game" mode of conflict, however, raises very different prospects for actual conflict. The most important distinction is that it is unavoidably interactive. As Rapoport pointed out, the initial aspect of the "game" conflict was an agreement about the rules of the contest to which both sides would adhere. Such an agreement must be mutual and therefore, is by definition interactive in nature. Beyond the basic rules by which both parties would abide, incompatible goals could be pursued.

The type of relationship between adversaries in Rapoport's "game" is also what Thomas Schelling envisaged in a limited war situation.⁴⁴ Given Schelling's conviction that restraint was the product the desire not to use the total means available, the relationship between adversaries and the achievement of limits would resemble and function much

⁴⁴ The contribution that Schelling made to the limited war literature, and to the questions of limitation and escalation in particular, was derived from the use of games theory. The purpose of using games theory to investigate problems of limitation and escalation was that it allowed for the controlled study of conflict situations where mutual interests existed. By studying games of mutual interest it was possible to theorize about the process of finding and maintaining limits in conflict.

The use of games theory has been criticized as inappropriate for building models of international behavior because it cannot capture the nuances of real political activity. For a summary of the case against games theory see; Quandt, Richard E., "On the Use of Game Models in Theories of International Relations", World Politics, XIV, October 1961, pp. 69-76.

like a bargaining situation;

The bargain can be polite or rude, entail threats as well as offers, assume the status-quo or ignore all rights and privileges, and assume mistrust rather than trust. Whether polite or impolite, constructive or aggressive, respectful or vicious, whether it occurs among friends or antagonists and whether or not there is a basis for trust and goodwill, there must be a common interest, if only the avoidance of mutual damage....⁴⁵

In Schelling's terminology, in a limited war adversaries are in a conflict-cooperation relationship. Physical force can be used, but if conflict is to remain limited both sides must cooperate to achieve and maintain restraints.

Although both parties to a dispute might recognize the need to cooperate in achieving and maintaining limits, the process by which limits would be determined will not be simple;

agreement on limits is difficult to reach, not only because of the uncertainties and divergence of interests but because negotiation is severely inhibited both during war and before it begins and because communication becomes difficult between adversaries in time of war.⁴⁶

It is in fact reasonable to argue that in the opening stages of conflict explicit negotiation of restraints is unlikely and this makes the search for limits all the more problematic. In such a situation, the limits that would be the product of the cooperation aspect of the adversarial relationship must be arrived at by a tacit bargaining process.

⁴⁵ Schelling, Thomas C., Arms and Influence, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1966, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Schelling, Thomas C., The Strategy of Conflict Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960, p. 53.

Schelling argued that the tacit coordination of common interests would be a process by which limits could be recognized and adhered to in conflict.⁴⁷ Specific restraints would be the result of both parties arriving at the same "focal points" at which a limit or limits could exist.⁴⁸ Focal points at which limits might be found could exist at different levels of conflict and take on different forms. For example, focal points could exist at the tactical level of battle. A geographic feature clearly evident to both sides can provide a point at which the coordination of interest - the institution of a limit - can be achieved. The feature could be a river or a border which appears as a natural focal point where restraint can be demonstrated and therefore incorporated into a conflict.⁴⁹ Target-type could also arise as a focal point at which the coordination of interests could take place. For example, by refraining from attacking cities in the battle area. Focal points could obviously exist at the strategic level as well. The most important aspect of these focal points, however, is that whether they are arrived at through tacit or explicit means, the process of communication in conflict is fraught with difficulties, and, therefore, the clarity of the focal point is a critical requirement. Both parties to the conflict must be equally able to clearly

⁴⁷ Ibid., Chapter 3. "Bargaining, Communication, and Limited War"

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 68.

⁴⁹ Korea provides a practical example of a geographical feature providing a focal point and consequently, an effective limit in the conflict. Both the Americans and the Communists refrained from expanding the war beyond the Korean peninsula. To do so would likely have been interpreted by the other as an expansion of the conflict and invite a corresponding enlargement of effort. In this way a limit emerges out of a tacit coordination of viewpoint about the significance of the geographical feature of the Korean peninsula.

distinguish the various potential focal points from one another. a focal point must be qualitatively different from those proximate to it, and not merely be different by degree.⁵⁰

Schelling's concept of focal points, or the coordination of interests, is a process by which limits can be arrived at by the tacit or explicit interaction of two adversaries. The process requires interaction and cannot function in a unilateralist context. If the process is operating, whether tacitly or explicitly, natural limits will be possible. This might appear to be like the natural limits that arise out of the unilateralist model; however, there are substantial differences. A natural limit that results from the nature of the objectives of the conflict is different in two ways. Such limits can be arrived at and maintained without interaction between adversaries and should be more stable. Thus escalation may be less problematic, and, as long as it does not threaten the natural limit, is not risky and, in all likelihood, of considerable value. On the other hand, natural limits under the alternative model of limitation (the desire to avoid using all means available) must be the product of interaction and cooperation between adversaries, and, consequently, are less stable. If escalation is to proceed in a controlled manner, the adversaries must both arrive at the same focal point of increased violence. In this way controlled escalation could be seen metaphorically as a ladder with different "rungs". This method of describing the process of controlled escalation was offered by Herman Kahn.⁵¹ Whether or not escalation

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 73.

⁵¹ See; Kahn, Herman, On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios, Praeger, New York, 1965. Kahn's book focuses on the concept of thresholds more than the actual process of escalation. (Smoke, Richard, War:

moves up the "ladder" in a controlled fashion, the important point is that escalation is far more likely in a dispute with substantial objectives, and the danger of a far wider scope of conflict is greater.

Support for this argument comes out of Schelling's conception of the purpose of limited war. Whereas Kissinger viewed limited war strategy as reducing the risk of total war by expanding deterrence below the nuclear retaliatory level, Schelling assumed the opposite. For Schelling, the whole purpose of limited war strategy, and the threat to engage in it, was to generate the shared risk of nuclear war.⁵² Schelling suggested that there were two interpretations for limited war. One interpretation was that which underpinned American strategy in Europe. The purposes of U.S. forces in Europe, Schelling argued, was to deter Soviet aggression, and if that failed, to resist in an appropriate fashion. The problem of defending Europe, therefore, was cast in terms of a series of deliberate decisions. A moderate attack would be dealt with by fighting a limited war and would not necessitate an all-out conflict that led to mutual annihilation. The enemy would then be forced either into seeking a political solution, or make a conscious decision to escalate substantially.⁵³

Controlling Escalation, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1977 p. 6)

Kahn develops an escalation ladder with forty-four rungs and six major thresholds. It is conceivable that Schelling would argue that many of the rungs are not qualitatively distinct enough to be focal points under the strained communication conditions that exist in conflict, and specifically tacit bargaining. Nonetheless, the concept focal points is evident in Kahn's theories.

⁵² Schelling The Strategy of Conflict p. 190-193.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 190.

The implications of this approach are substantial. In the first instance, limited war characterized in this manner is not a natural generator of mutual risk. This conception of limited war sees the initial decision to respond with force as entailing no risk for the United States, and, in the absence of a decision by the adversary to escalate, victory for the Americans. In this way the decision to increase risk is transferred to the adversary, which underscores the second implication of this interpretation of limited war; it is a strategy with an obvious unilateralist character. The United States imposes the rules; it takes the dominant position in the conflict by its response and forces the adversary to make the decision to dramatically escalate the war. The limits of conflict and the escalation within it, therefore, are not the product of interactive bargaining where the successful limitation of conflict is the result of the mutual agreement of the adversaries.

The second interpretation of limited war, one to which Schelling personally adhered, is that of threatening to engage or to fight a limited war for the express purpose of generating mutual risk. The risk that is generated has two parts; first, there are the direct costs involved that are the result of a conflict, such as casualties and the loss of territory, and, secondly, that both parties are exposed to the increased risk of general war.⁵⁴ This approach differs considerably from the first in that, since the risk is shared, unilateral dictation of the rules of conflict is not possible. The relationship between the adversaries is, as Clausewitz suggested it must be, a case of two opponents locked in battle, the course of which is

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 191.

contingent upon the actions of both. While Schelling differed from Clausewitz in terms of his focus on the limitation of means rather than ends, the relationship between adversaries in conflict, and the nature of their interaction, was the same for both Clausewitz and Schelling. Clausewitz argued that once adversaries were in battle with one another, neither party was in complete control.⁵⁵ Unilateral imposition of the terms of conflict, and logically its termination, could not be realized by one party in a conflict.⁵⁶ Schelling visualized exactly the same scenario when he discussed the nature of the threat to engage in limited war;

whether it does or does not occur is not a matter altogether controlled by the threatener. Just how an all-out war would occur - just where the fault, initiative, or misunderstanding may occur - is not sure. Whatever it is that makes limited war between great powers a risky thing, the risk is a genuine one that neither side can altogether dispel even if it wants to.⁵⁷

Thus, if limited war is the generation of mutual risk and the relationship of the adversaries is interactive and under the control of neither party, then limitation must be the product of wishing to avoid the use of all means available under the strains of mutual risk which cannot be unilaterally controlled. This interpretation of limited war and the process of limitation and escalation is markedly different than that of Kissinger, Osgood, and the emerging patterns of American limited war strategy of the late 1950's and early 1960's.

⁵⁵ Clausewitz, On War, p. 77.

⁵⁶ The assumption made here is that the adversaries in conflict are not so disproportionately matched that one is powerless to effectively resist the other to some extent. If this were the case the stronger of the two ought to be able to achieve its objective without the resort to force, or at least of a prolonged and extensive nature.

⁵⁷ Schelling The Strategy of Conflict, p. 191.

What emerges in the limited war and escalation literature of the 1950's and 1960's are two identifiable models of limitation, one which is unilateralist in nature and another that is interactive in nature. In the abundance of works by other authors, there is a tendency to reflect one of the two models by the assumptions that are made about the nature of restraint in limited war. The differences between the contending approaches to limitation are of great importance in their implications for limited war strategy.

In the first instance the salience, or problem, of limitation and escalation will differ depending on what is assumed to be the "mechanism" of limitation. If one assumes that limitation is the function of clearly defined and mutually recognized objectives, then the problem of limitation and escalation is less significant. This is so because a clearly defined political objective will tend to naturally induce the limits of conflict. In this respect the "limited war as limited objectives" approach is consistent with the Clausewitzian concept of limited war. The effort made for the objective will be defined by the nature of the political objective sought; the maximum effort will not be a matter of uncertainty given clear political objectives. The existence of a natural limit defined by political objectives has important implications for escalation as well. If both sides recognize limited objectives, escalation which does not threaten or cross the natural limit, and therefore does not raise the problem of unlimited or less limited objectives, will not be highly problematic. The natural limit provides stability under which increased military effort is possible and indeed, profitable.

Another implication of the unilateralist approach has to do with the relationship between adversaries. The relationship need not be interactive beyond the initial recognition of limited political objectives. If the process of declaring and recognizing limited objectives has been undertaken, the requirement for purposeful interaction can potentially cease. Providing conflict remains within the natural limit, one party can attempt to dominate the escalation ladder and dictate the rules of conflict and its termination. Only if violence moves beyond the pervasive limit, therefore expanding the original objectives, is interactive bargaining with the adversary once again required.

The purpose of limited war strategy, viewed from the "limited objectives" perspective, is significant as well. Limited war from this perspective is risk reducing in its thrust. As Kissinger and others argued, the intent behind limited war strategy was to deter communist expansion at the periphery. Only if deterrence failed was there an operational purpose for limited war strategy. Thus the entire objective of a declared limited war strategy was to reduce the risk of conflict breaking out. Furthermore, if conflict were to break out, the pursuit of escalation dominance (unilateralism in the military conduct of the dispute) would also be risk reducing in that the United States would "control" the conflict. The risk of higher levels of violence would be transferred to the enemy, who, under the assumption that he recognizes the limited objectives at stake, would rather pursue peace than war since the United States could prevail at any level of violence he chose. Limited war strategy thus sought to

reduce the likelihood of any conflict, and if conflict should occur, to reduce the risk of nuclear warfare.

The implications of the alternative view of limited war - the avoidance of the use of total means irrespective of the ends pursued - are very different. Although a limit on weapon-type might initially emerge in conflict, because political objectives may be unclear or explicitly unlimited, the problem of limitation and escalation is central to limited conflict. The unilateralism of the other view of limited war that is a possible strategy - perhaps the best one - would invite disaster under the assumptions of the Schelling/Brodie model. It might be possible for initial restraint on the use of nuclear weapons to operate without any form of communication, tacit or explicit, however, adversarial interaction is necessary if total conflict is to be avoided.

The stability of limits, and consequently the probability of escalation, will be the central problem of limited war under the assumptions of the Schelling/Brodie model. Political objectives that may not be limited or recognized as such, as conflict unfolds and one side finds itself at the disadvantage, will invite escalation. As limits are compromised, conflict will either spiral out of control to total warfare, or will come to rest at another limitation. The critical point is that if conflict is to remain limited, or escalate under a modicum of control, it will be the result of adversarial interaction. Whether tacit or explicit, each side must bargain with the other as neither is in complete control of the conduct and the outcome of the conflict. In this respect the interactive model is similar to Clau-

sewitzian theory. Unilateral control of conflict was impossible, Clausewitz argued, as each side dictates to the other in equal fashion; conflict by definition was the interaction of two adversaries. The unilateralism that could not have been part of Clausewitzian limited war could not be part of this interactive model either.

The purpose of limited war, therefore, takes on very different connotations if one applies the interactive model. Instead of using limited war to reduce risks, the whole purpose behind limited war strategy was to generate mutual risk. If one party is deterred by the threat of another to engage in limited war, it is not because it was evident that the threatener could prevail, but, rather, because of a desire not to be exposed to the mutual risk of annihilation. If limited war is engaged in, both are threatened and neither is in complete control. Limitation, if it is sought, will result only from the interaction of the adversaries, that in turn leads to agreement on the scope of conflict and its termination.

The differences between the two models of limited war also extends to their relationship to Clausewitzian theory. On the one hand, the unilateralist model can be argued to take as its focus, and specifically with regard to the limiting mechanism, the importance of political objectives. The similarity to Clausewitz, however, ends at this point. The unilateralists assume a relationship between ends and means that Clausewitz did not recognize. The calibration of force to be commensurate with the objectives sought, and for such calibration of type and amount to enforce limitation, is the product of modern strategic thinking. On the other hand, the interactive model is Clau-

sewitzian to the extent that it portrays the relationship between adversaries as a dynamic and interactive process. The interactive approach also goes beyond Clausewitz by its adoption of means as the limiting mechanism in limited conflict. The critical question to ask is whether one of the two approaches to limited war found greater favour in the American strategic community.

In reviewing the American limited war literature it is fair to suggest that of the two approaches, the unilateralist perspective is more popular. This, it can be argued, is the result of two factors; first American historical tradition, and, secondly, the strategic policy environment of the 1950's and 1960's. American thinking on the relationship between force and politics - that of unlimited objectives and unlimited means in support of them - favoured the adoption of the unilateralist view of limited war because it tended to offer a strategy that allowed the United States to dominate and control the conduct of limited war. It was a case, one could convincingly argue, of reintroducing the traditional American way of war to American security policy by devising a strategy that could deal with the quintessential problem of applying force in the post-war age; that is, the problem of nuclear weapons. As long as limited war strategy could deal with the vexing dilemma of escalation, then American dictation of the scope and rules of conflict could be followed. Beyond this, the policy environment of the period was such that a strategy that gave the United States control of events was also preferred.

Although the Eisenhower Administration argued that the "new look" policy in general, and massive retaliation in particular, returned the

initiative to the United States, critics were unconvinced. These policies left the United States impotent in responding to what appeared to be the dominant threat; the challenge of peripheral expansion by the communist bloc. If the threat to retaliate massively was not credible, as critics argued, then the initiative remained with the enemy if the United States had no strategy to deal with peripheral conflict.⁵⁸ In terms of the practical application of limited war strategy, the use of VietNam as a test case will provide evidence as to whether the assertion that the unilateralist model was adopted by the United States is correct and whether this model tends to reflect some aspects of the traditional American way of war.

⁵⁸ Gaddis, John Lewis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Post War American National Security Policy, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982, see chapters 5 to 8.

Chapter III

VIETNAM: THE TEST CASE FOR AMERICAN LIMITED WAR STRATEGY

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the Vietnam War as a test case of the American concept of limited war. There are a number of instances of American activity in the 1960's which could also be studied as examples of American involvement at the periphery which sought to contain what was perceived to be communist expansion. Among these are Cuba, Laos, and the Dominican Republic, where the United States committed its resources to contain communist pressures in areas remote from the central theatre of Europe. There are several reasons for the selection of Vietnam as the test case. Vietnam stands out because of the scope of American involvement, its duration, and also because of the political divisiveness it engendered with respect to American commitments in the Third World.¹

The second, and perhaps most critical reason that Vietnam should be considered as a test case is that the American leadership regarded it to be the quintessential test of the new strategy which replaced Eisenhower's nuclear-centred security policy.² While there were fundamental problems in applying limited war thinking to Vietnam, given some of the key assumptions of the limited war theory of the 1950's,

¹ Gaddis, John Lewis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American Security Policy, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982, p. 237.

² Ibid., p.237; also see Papp Daniel S., Vietnam: The View from Moscow, Peking, Washington, McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, Jefferson North Carolina, 1981, p. 18.

decision-makers in the early 1960's did not readily recognize them. Retrospective analysis clearly brings to the forefront of debate these very issues. Nonetheless, in asserting that Vietnam provides the best test case, however, these issues are not of immediate importance. The perceptions of those who conducted the Vietnam War makes the use of Vietnam as the test case wholly legitimate. The fact that the American leadership thought that Vietnam was the critical test provides two important angles from which the American concept of limited war can be analyzed; first, it reveals, however mistaken, what was thought to be a limited war situation, and how such a conflict should be conducted; and, secondly, the recognition of inconsistencies between the assumptions of limited war theory and the realities of the Vietnam case allows for the further assessment of the applicability of limited war strategy to peripheral conflicts

The analysis of Vietnam throughout the chapter will be separated into several parts. The first section will outline briefly the development of the early American position on the unrest in Vietnam. The purpose here is to demonstrate that American attitudes were the product of the general development of global containment policy. It will be argued also through subsequent sections that this perception of Vietnam in the context of global containment was a consistent approach of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. The second section will be devoted to a brief consideration of the Kennedy period, in which not only was the "globalist" perspective maintained, but that increased American involvement reflected some of the key assumptions contained in the limited war literature with respect to declared doc-

trine and capabilities. The third section will deal with the Johnson Administration, and will focus on the application of force in Vietnam as an example of American limited war strategy in operation. The central argument of this section will be that the application of force in Vietnam was consistent with some of the principles embodied in limited war theory. Specifically, it will be argued that the application of force reflected the unilateralist model of limited war and was in effect really a "compellant" strategy in which escalation dominance was central. This portion of the chapter will focus primarily of the bombing campaign known as "Rolling Thunder" and will assess the campaign both in its conception and evaluation in light of stated American objectives. The final section of the chapter will be devoted to addressing the failure of American strategy in Vietnam with a focus on the tensions, or inconsistencies, between the Vietnam case and the limited war literature. The main argument will be that the Vietnam conflict encompassed two distinct levels of conflict, where the application of a limited war strategy raised considerable problems in satisfying political objectives at both levels of conflict. Conclusions drawn from the final section will provide the groundwork for assessing the post-Vietnam problem of peripheral conflict for the United States.

The history of the Vietnam conflict goes far beyond Western involvement in it; however, as an aspect of peripheral conflict in which the United States had concerns, the problem essentially begins in 1945. Initially, the conflict took on the dimensions of a dispute between France and the Vietnamese, where the American attitude was distinctly one of disapproval of what they perceived to be French

colonial interests.³ The shift in American perceptions of the conflict to one of a fundamentally East-West problem took place in the 1950's. The important point about the changed conceptions of the Indo-China conflict was that they were driven by factors external to Vietnam itself.⁴ At the end of World War II, the Americans initially assumed that great power cooperation would continue, and this led to a feeling that the primary international problems would be economic reconstruction and the stable management of decolonization. While the problem of economic reconstruction would remain an issue, the dissolution of empires presented a very different and ominous twist with the breakdown of cooperation with the Soviet Union. A string of events at the periphery, most notably China in 1949 and Korea in 1950, shifted the perception that the problem in the Third World would be one of decolonization to the new imperialism of communism.

In this respect, Vietnam was transformed from a problem of resisting colonialism to a problem of containing communism. In 1950, then Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, suggested that the United States aid to the French was important because of the threat of Soviet imperialism.⁵ The definition of the Vietnam problem, therefore, was not drawn from the internal situation of Vietnam and its struggle for some form of independent nationhood, but instead, was drawn from American perceptions of the global balance between East and West.⁶ What is signif-

³ See Siracusa J. M., "Early U.S. Involvement in Vietnam 1945-50: An Aspect of American Cold War Mentality", World Review, vol. 13 #2 1974 p. 13.

⁴ Barnett Richard J., Intervention and Revolution: The U.S. in the Third World, The World Publishing Company, NewYork, 1968 p. 181.

⁵ Ibid., p. 187.

icant about the global roots of American perceptions about Vietnam is that the "Vietnam problem" runs parallel with the development of limited war strategy. The problems of global containment, of which Vietnam was a recognizable case even prior to the apex of the limited war debate, spurred considerable disagreement about the strategy to successfully contain communism. As the strategic debate increasingly focused on the problems of peripheral containment, limited war strategy gained in prominence. As a result of this, Vietnam increased in importance as well. There existed a history of American concern over Vietnam that was consistently a product of the global perception of East-West struggle, and as the problems of global containment were seen to be solved by the ability to deal with peripheral challenges, Vietnam fell into place as the natural candidate for a practical test of limited war strategy.

While Vietnam in the 1950's was significant from the point of view of preparing the ground for direct American involvement in the 1960's, American activity under Eisenhower could not be said to reflect any aspects of limited war strategy. The Eisenhower Administration was involved only in underwriting French military actions and assistance in small scale covert activities to frustrate Ho Chi Minh.⁷ Under the Kennedy Administration however, the American role changed to include

⁶ See Thompson W. Scott, Frizzel Donaldson D., The Lessons Of Vietnam, Russak & Company, New York, 1977, p. 1; Kail F.M., What Washington Said: Administration Rhetoric and the Vietnam War 1949-1969 Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1973, pp. 18-23; Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, pp. 169-70, Porter Gareth, Vietnam: A History in Documents, New American Library Times Mirror, New York, 1981 documentary evidence p. 86.

⁷ Palmer, Dave Richard, Summons of the Trumpet: U.S.-Vietnam in Perspective, Presidio Press, San Raphael California, 1978, p. 7.

larger scale military assistance to the South Vietnamese, and some aspects of limited war thinking were reflected in American policy during his administration.

The Kennedy Administration entered office with a determination to put distance between itself and its predecessor with respect to containment strategy. By the end of the Eisenhower Administration the central assumptions of the "new look" had been fully subjected to criticism, and the result was a considerable literature on the strategy of limited war as the solution to the weaknesses of Eisenhower's approach. The Kennedy Administration was very much in tune with the criticisms of the "new look" and with some of the principles of the new limited war theory as well. Nonetheless, the Kennedy Administration's view of Vietnam was consistent with that of Eisenhower's. The Vietnam problem was defined in the context of the global balance and the threat to it if communism was allowed to expand at the periphery.⁸ The tendency to define the Vietnam problem in terms of the global balance between East and West reflected the traditional American interpretation of the role of force in supporting foreign policy. The domino theory, which argued that a failure to stop communism in Vietnam would lead to the loss of all of Asia, and eventually the overall security of the West, was the perfect example of the American predilection to view security, and the threats to it, as being absolute in nature. American objectives in Vietnam, therefore, were not to lessen the communist threat, but, rather, to completely stop it from spread-

⁸ Aliano, Richard A., American Defense Policy From Eisenhower to Kennedy: The Politics of Changing Military Requirements 1957-1961, Ohio University Press, Athens Ohio, 1975, p. 233; also See Porter, Vietnam: A History in Documents, Documentary evidence p. 221.

ing. At no point was it considered feasible to allow the unification of Vietnam, and then subsequently to issue a warning that further expansion would not be tolerated. The Kennedy Administration, as did the Eisenhower Administration, viewed its policies regarding Vietnam to have been consistent with the overall directions of post-war American foreign policy.⁹ The idea of an active "roll back" of the communist sphere of influence was not seriously considered. It was felt that further losses to communism had to be opposed. In spite of some similarities between the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations, some equally important differences existed.

Theodore Draper has argued that Kennedy and Eisenhower approached the Vietnam problem in the same manner and with the same inhibitions. Both Administrations had a limited commitment, and, consequently, had a limited liability as well.¹⁰ American liability in Vietnam was limited under Eisenhower and Kennedy because neither President had committed U.S. troops to combat roles, and thereby established a political commitment from which it would be difficult to withdraw. In some respects, Draper's argument is a good one, but on deeper consideration, it misses an important difference between the strategic outlook of the two administrations. Although the Eisenhower Administration had by the late 1950's retreated somewhat from its initial "massive retaliation" stance, the fundamental conviction that there were limited means available to the United States in the pursuit of long term containment was one Eisenhower could not readily discard.¹¹ Kennedy

⁹ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 238.

¹⁰ Draper, Theodore, Abuse of Power, Viking Press, New York, 1967. p. 62.

and his principal colleagues did not share Eisenhower's view that American means were limited and that nuclear forces had to be the centrepin of U.S. strategy.¹² As a result of differing views on the means available, and in conjunction with the development of a new strategy for peripheral containment, the Kennedy Administration retooled and revitalized American forces to give them the capability to respond to such peripheral challenges.

Eisenhower consistently restrained defence spending on conventional forces, given the assumptions of his strategic policy, whereas Kennedy did exactly the opposite. In consonance with congressional attitudes, which also reflected his own convictions, Kennedy increased spending on conventional forces in the belief that a conventional strategy was needed to deal with communist expansion at the periphery. There also existed a specific attraction for counter-insurgency warfare as a strategy to deal with peripheral challenges.¹³ The implications of the shift in thinking between the Kennedy and Eisenhower Administrations are significant.

The theory of limited war, as revealed through the literature of the 1950's and early 1960's, became official doctrine (flexible response), and was combined with the physical capability to operation-

¹¹ See Dulles, John Foster, "Challenge and Response in United States Foreign Policy", Foreign Affairs, XXXVI, October 1957; Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, See chapter 6 "Implementing the New Look" for an extensive discussion of the assumptions regarding means in the Eisenhower Administration.

¹² Ibid., chapter 7 "Kennedy, Johnson and the strategic concept of flexible response" for a complete discussion of the assumptions of the Kennedy/Johnson Administrations of the question of the means available for long term containment.

¹³ Barnett, Intervention and Revolution, p. 210.

alize the doctrine under Kennedy. Specifically, the argument contained in limited war theory that war must be fought for limited objectives, and with limited and carefully calibrated means, was also the foundation of the strategic concept of flexible response. The underlying concept of Flexible Response was that any challenge to American security would elicit an appropriately measured reaction. Therefore, if the challenge took the form of a limited conventional challenge at the periphery, then the United States would defend with conventional and measured force. Counter-insurgency strategy and the forces which could operationalize it were both products of the Kennedy Administration. Henry Kissinger argued that this development was essential if the United States was to be able to respond to peripheral challenges and successfully conduct a limited war.¹⁴ The creation of doctrine and capability did not in itself change American commitment to Vietnam per se, but it did substantially alter American thinking about the management of the United State's current and potential involvement in Southeast Asia. In April of 1961, Kennedy directed his Under Secretary of State, Roswell Gilpatrick, to undertake a study of the insurgency in Vietnam and to recommend actions to counter it. The report reiterated the significance of Vietnam in both the Southeast Asian and global balances. This was no different a depiction of affairs than that held by Eisenhower; however, the operational role that was envisaged for the United States, and the purpose it was to serve, reflected a change in thinking about the use of force. The concept of operations, although covert, was seen as not only limited, but one in which the use of American resources would serve as a "signalling" instrument to

¹⁴ Kissinger, Henry Aron, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, Harper & Brothers, NewYork, 1957, p. 145.

communicate U.S. intentions and resolve.¹⁵ Throughout Kennedy's tenure as President, American advisory assistance to the South Vietnamese was increased and also expanded to include limited assistance in air operations in the south. Significantly increased American participation in the Vietnamese conflict was a product of the Johnson administration.

Johnson, consistent with both Kennedy and Eisenhower, viewed the significance of Vietnam in the context of American global containment policy. Johnson also shared with Kennedy a belief in the importance of displaying American resolve in order to prevent Vietnam from falling to communism. The American position internationally would be seriously undermined by a communist success in Southeast Asia, Johnson argued, and therefore it was imperative that the United States ensure the success of its policies in Vietnam.¹⁶ Johnson, unlike Kennedy, was forced to consider substantially increased American involvement as a result of the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam during 1964. The low level of American involvement in Vietnam under Kennedy resulted in a focus on the use of counter-insurgency by the South Vietnamese forces under the guidance of U.S. advisors, rather than a significant commitment of American resources in some fashion consistent with limited war strategy. Nonetheless, the idea of using American forces as a signal to friend and foe was tentatively established. Johnson, on the other hand, elevated the "signalling" concept to become a guiding

¹⁵ Porter, Vietnam: A History in Documents, Report of the Gilpatrick Task Force April 27 1961 [extract], p.208-9; also see, Rosen, Stephen J., "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War", International Security, vol. 7 #2 Fall 1982, p. 89.

¹⁶ Palmer, Summons of the Trumpet, p. 18.

principle of the American use of force in Vietnam.¹⁷

While direct involvement with ground troops and the initiation of a large scale bombing campaign did not occur until 1965, covert operations under President Johnson reflect the influence of limited war concepts. Specifically, as it became evident that the United States would have to become more directly involved to prevent the fall of South Vietnam, decision-makers became more concerned about what signals the use of force would send to the enemy rather than how such force was to be militarily effective.¹⁸ Although the stated political objectives of the United States focused on South Vietnam and its survival as an independent non-communist state, the possible application of military force in pursuit of those objectives increasingly incorporated North Vietnam in the calculations. President Johnson explicitly directed his principal advisors to take into account, when drawing up contingency plans with respect to the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam, "to shaping such pressures so as to produce the maximum credible deterrent effect on Hanoi."¹⁹ This statement by Johnson, in which he invokes the image of deterrence, is interesting and needs further investigation.

The classic argument regarding deterrence would lead one to conclude that once it becomes necessary actually to apply military force, deterrence has failed. In thinking about deterrence, as John Foster

¹⁷ Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War", p. 88.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁹ Galluci, Robert L., Neither Peace Nor Honor: The Politics of American Military Policy in VietNam, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1975, p. 37.

Dulles conceived of it in his strategy of massive retaliation, the requirement to act would signify the breakdown of deterrence. Dulles attempted deterrence by threat alone. The problem with massive retaliation, as its critics readily pointed out, was that it was not a credible deterrent to peripheral challenges.²⁰ The strategists critical of massive retaliation turned to limited war as a way of credibility responding to peripheral conflicts, and argued that a credible limited war strategy might provide the deterrent that massive retaliation could not. This was precisely what Henry Kissinger suggested that the strategy of limited war was designed to achieve: deterrence through declared doctrine and force capability, and if deterrence should fail, provide an operational response to limited conflict.²¹

It is reasonable to argue that Kissinger, and for that matter anyone who was a proponent of limited war, would have preferred that the enunciation of doctrine and the creation of capabilities to operationalize doctrine would by themselves deter peripheral aggression. This would have been deterrence in the classic sense. It is equally reasonable to argue, however, that the American leadership at the time of the Vietnam crisis, while hoping to deter, was imbued with the feeling that unfortunately some demonstration of commitment was necessary to succeed in doing so. This appears to be what President Johnson was

²⁰ For a sampling of massive retaliation critiques see; Bowles, Chester, "Our Present Foreign Policy", Foreign Affairs, LX, April 30 1954, pp. 86-95; Brodie, Bernard, "Unlimited Weapons and Limited War", The Republic, XI, November 18, 1954, pp. 16-21; "The Dulles Doctrine of Instant Retaliation", New Republic, CXXX, March 29 1954, pp. 10-14. (statements by various analysts criticizing the strategy of massive retaliation)

²¹ Kissinger, Henry A., The Necessity For Change: Prospects of American Foreign Policy, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York, 1961, p. 59.

thinking, when he directed his subordinates to consider options that would have a deterrent effect on North Vietnam. It is not apparent that Johnson consciously linked his thoughts to Kissinger's pronouncements on limited war, but the parallels are unmistakable. A good example of the political "signalling" concept of force application, and an attempt through demonstrated commitment to deter, is provided by Johnson's covert operations of 1964.

Covert operations had been undertaken in the Kennedy Administration, but they failed to produce any significant results. The pressure to intensify these covert activities came in 1963 as the situation in South Vietnam progressively deteriorated. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) directed the Commander-in-Chief Pacific to draw up a set of plans for covert operations against the North, which took on the designation of OPLAN-34a.²² The JCS rationale for the programme was to raise the cost to the North of supporting war in the South and also to raise the spectre of increased U.S. pressure that could threaten the economic and industrial base of North Vietnam.²³ The President was very receptive to the concept behind OPLAN-34a for a number of reasons. In the first case, Johnson was supportive of directing operations toward North Vietnam as a result of his agreement with what has been termed the "Rostow Thesis". Walt Rostow, in a memorandum circulated around the administration, argued that the best method of defeating an externally supported insurgency was to focus

²² The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United Decisionmaking on Vietnam, The Senator Gravel Edition, Beacon Press, Boston, 1971, pp. 150-51.

²³ Thompson, James Clay, Rolling Thunder: Understanding Policy and Program Failure, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1980, p. 16.

one's actions to affect the external source, in this case North Vietnam. A second important aspect of the "Rostow Thesis" was that it led to military operations which were intended to be more psychological in effect than purely 'military'.²⁴ This concept of the utility of military force - that of seeking political or psychological effects rather than traditionally defined military ones - was consistent with Johnson's thinking, and with the opinions of many of his close advisors. For example, William Bundy, in one of the earliest elaborations of the case for directing operations toward North Vietnam stressed the political thrust of the proposed actions. It was explicitly outlined that the military defeat of North Vietnam should be ruled out as the underlying purpose of using force against the North.²⁵ The rationale for ruling out the use of force to achieve a traditional military victory was straightforward, and illustrated the influence of limited war thinking on the operational conduct of Vietnam. It was important in the minds of the Johnson Administration that the conflict remain limited, and, consequently, the application of force to coerce the enemy, instead of trying to defeat him, was used expressly for the purpose of maintaining effective limitation.

Although the military would later consistently oppose the concept of operations first demonstrated by covert actions, OPLAN-34a reflected a consensus on the method and purpose of covert operations in 1964. Since the United States saw its objectives in Vietnam as limited to the maintenance of South Vietnam, military pressure on the North must

²⁴ The Pentagon Papers, p. 109.

²⁵ Porter, Vietnam: A History in Documents, "Draft Memorandum For The President by Assistant Secretary of Defense William P. Bundy, March 1, 1964, [extract]," pp. 263-66.

also be limited so that means were commensurate with ends. This concept of force application was consistent with arguments that originated in NSC-68, which were later championed by the advocates of limited war strategy. More significant, however, was the purpose of applying military force; it was not to defeat the enemy in the traditional sense, but to compel him to alter his intentions. It was, for example, explicitly recognized that OPLAN-34a in itself had little chance of achieving U.S. goals directly. The purpose of the covert operations was to signal Hanoi of American commitment.²⁶ It was hoped that the prospect of overt and less limited American military pressure would considerably sober North Vietnam's desire to support insurgency in the South.

The idea of force application as a signalling strategy had similarities with the general concept of limited war, and specifically with elements of the interactive model of limited war. As limited war strategy ruled out the traditional American approach to war of total means toward total ends, the use of force as a way of signalling to the enemy was a direct product of limited war reasoning. A situation in which adversaries were in the process of defining limits to a conflict is a classic case where force could be used to signal one another. This is exactly what Schelling's process of "tacit coordination of interests" described.²⁷ A second interesting aspect of the

²⁶ The Pentagon Papers, p. 106.

²⁷ It is important to note, and this will be a central argument in later discussion in the chapter, that the relationship between adversaries is paramount in the success of a signalling strategy. For signalling to be successful adversaries must have a symmetrical view of the conflict, and the process of signalling must be interactive. American strategy in Vietnam failed to take both of these requirements into account.

signalling strategy of OPLAN-34a is that it can be persuasively argued that it was an attempt to invoke deterrence through the display of commitment. This, as argued previously, is consistent with Kissinger's view on the purpose of limited war strategy. The signalling strategy also revealed another point of common ground with limited war theory, this time, however, it revealed a link with the unilateralist model. When looking specifically at the message which the United States wished to communicate to Hanoi, the unilateralist strategy of escalation dominance lurked below the surface. In the minds of both the JCS and their civilian superiors, the message that North Vietnam was to receive was that, aside from U.S. commitment, if further military action was necessary North Vietnam would be punished severely. Increased American actions would be contingent upon the North Vietnamese response to Washington's signal of commitment. The important point to consider about the nature of the message is that it does not reflect a bargaining relationship between adversaries over the terms of a conflict and its termination. The nature of the message made it an attempt to dictate the terms suitable to the United States, backed by the implicit threat of greater harm if the terms were not complied with. The signalling strategy that ended up being applied in Vietnam was a communication process that was, for the most part, operating in one direction.

The attempt made through covert operations to affect North Vietnamese support for insurgency in the South failed. The endemic domestic instability in South Vietnam was made worse by successive coups, and, perhaps sensing the precariousness of the situation, the North Viet-

namese stepped up their efforts in the South. It is evident that the message that Washington intended to impress upon Hanoi was either not recognized, or it was simply ignored.

By 1965 the crisis in the South was at its peak and the United States could no longer put off a decision as to whether it would become directly involved with combat troops. The watershed had been reached, and the costs and dangers of substantial military involvement had to be weighed against the ramifications of losing South Vietnam. The perceived significance of South Vietnam in the Asian and global balances, coupled with the conviction that the United States possessed both the strategy and the capability to succeed in Vietnam, led the Johnson Administration to choose to stay the course in Southeast Asia. American military involvement manifested itself in two ways: first, a ground war in South Vietnam, and, secondly, a bombing campaign directed at North Vietnam. With respect to identifying and assessing the central aspects of American strategy in Vietnam, as well as relating these themes to limited war concepts, the air war over North Vietnam serves as the best focus for analysis. The reasoning behind focusing on the bombing campaign is straightforward. All of the hallmarks of American strategy in Vietnam are exemplified in the air war; these include graduated escalation, the granting of sanctuaries, the use of force to signal intentions, and, finally, the continuous search for a negotiated settlement. Furthermore, the bombing campaign, as opposed to the ground war, applied force against North Vietnam itself.

The first bombing missions north of the DMZ (demilitarized zone) were reprisal raids made, in part, for an attack on U.S. army barracks

at Pleiku. The operation was codenamed "Flaming Dart" and it represented from the American point of view a significant change in the scope of the Vietnam conflict. Prior to "Flaming Dart", the Americans portrayed the North's role in the insurgency as one of support and assistance. After the reprisal raids the American position changed. It was now argued that the rebellion in the South was primarily the product of North Vietnamese infiltration. Also of significance was the fact that the reprisal raids were not linked to attacks on American installations and servicemen only. The "Flaming Dart" raids were linked to the Pleiku incident as well as some attacks on South Vietnamese personnel.²⁸

The purpose behind the reprisal bombings was also significant. The "Flaming Dart" operations were intended to signal a change in the ground rules of the conflict in several ways; firstly, that the rationale for American counteraction had changed, and that the scope of the conflict was greater, and, finally, that North Vietnam's position in the conflict had been altered.²⁹ American response to what was now clearly viewed as aggression in the South instigated by the North, was no longer going to be linked only with attacks on American installations and personnel. From "Flaming Dart" onward, the U.S. response would be linked to the general pattern of aggression in the South. As well, the raids were intended to be an escalation of the conflict, and interrelated to the escalation of the conflict, a signal that North Vietnam could not longer expect complete sanctuary within its own ter-

²⁸ Papp, Vietnam: the view from Moscow, Peking, Washington, pp. 49-50.

²⁹ Lewy, Guenter, America In Vietnam, Oxford University Press, New York, 1978, pp. 374-75.

ritory. In this respect the previously implied threat of direct costs to North Vietnam that were embodied in covert operations if her policies did not change became a reality. The purpose was again to display commitment and to effect the calculations of the North by threatening greater punishment if there was no compliance with American terms. The targets selected for "Flaming Dart" were also significant in terms of signalling, and, consequently, they were dominated by political considerations more than military ones.³⁰ The raids were not directed toward "high value" targets (they consisted of NVA barracks), and the intended restraint was obvious. This was a restraint, one could argue, that foreshadowed Washington's gradual escalation policy.³¹

In the aftermath of the "Flaming Dart" raids the North Vietnamese showed no signs of reducing their efforts; in fact, they showed the very opposite. Another set of attacks on U. S. military installations occurred and the United States launched "Flaming Dart II"; a series of raids that followed the same principles as before. The period of reprisal raids against North Vietnam was also a period of increased discussion within the Johnson Administration regarding a sustained bombing programme. Presidential advisor McGeorge Bundy was in South Vietnam at the time of the Pleiku attack, and in a memorandum to the President advocated a policy of "sustained reprisal" against North Vietnam. Bundy argued for a policy of air and naval action against

³⁰ Ibid., p. 377.

³¹ In fact, the earliest example of graduated escalation was displayed in the covert operations of OPLAN-34a, where the twelve month programme was separated into four periods in which it was intended that the intensity of operations would increase. See; Thompson, Rolling Thunder, p. 17; The Pentagon Papers, pp. 161-64.

North Vietnam which would be justified and related to the Viet Cong activities in the South. The purpose of such a programme, in Bundy's mind, was primarily to bring about an improvement of the situation in South Vietnam as " (t)he immediate and critical targets are in the South - in the minds of the South Vietnamese and in the minds of the Viet Cong cadres."³² Bundy, however, did not discount the value of a reprisal programme in terms of affecting the leadership of North Vietnam;

(w)hile emphasizing the importance of reprisals in the South, we do not exclude the impact on Hanoi. We believe, indeed, that it is of great importance that the level of reprisal be adjusted rapidly and visibly to both upward and downward shifts in the level of Viet Cong offences. We want to keep before Hanoi the carrot of our desisting as well as the stick of continued pressure. We also need to conduct the application of force so that there is always the prospect of worse to come.³³

The concept of operations in Bundy's memorandum reflects a number of central strategies of the American use of force throughout the Vietnam conflict. There was no doubt that military operations were for the purpose of signalling. Military victory in the classic sense was not a factor in Bundy's proposed plan; "(t)he object would not be to 'win' the air war against Hanoi, but rather to influence the course of the struggle in the South."³⁴ The concept of graduated escalation was also implied in Bundy's proposal, and more importantly, it was escalation in which the United States would dominate the escalation ladder. By tying the level of American counteractions to the level of the adversary's actions, and where at each potential level of violence the ene-

³² Porter, Vietnam: A History in Documents, "Memorandum For The President From McGeorge Bundy, February 7, 1965", pp. 295-99.

³³ Ibid., p. 298.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 297.

my chose the United States threatened that worse punishment could or would occur, the United States maintained the upper hand. The result of such a situation ought to be the realization by the North that it could not win, and therefore the best solution would be to negotiate a settlement of the conflict.

This line of reasoning is consistent with segments of the limited war literature and displays a unilateralist view of limited conflict, and, specifically, it reflects a strategy of escalation dominance for the purpose of compelling the enemy. A strategy of escalation dominance, with its unilateralist undertones, can be argued to be inconsistent with Clausewitzian theory. Recalling the discussion of Clausewitz's conception of limitation and escalation from chapter II, the point is that when locked in battle neither of the adversaries is in complete control of the dynamics of the conflict. Each adversary dictates to the other as much as his opponent in turn dictates to him. It is not Clausewitzian, therefore, to attempt to dominate the escalation ladder and dictate the terms of the conflict and its resolution to the point where one is, in effect, neglecting to take into account the behavior of the adversary. Although the concept of using force as a signalling instrument appears on the surface to conform to the interactive model of limited war, the attempt to invoke escalation dominance renders the communication process more unilateral than interactive. For this reason, the model of limited war that influenced the application of military force in Vietnam was the unilateralist model.

Bundy was not alone in advocating a sustained bombing of the North. Ambassador Taylor also called for a bombing programme that he referred to as "graduated reprisals".³⁵ Taylor's concept of operations focused more on the matter of affecting the will of North Vietnam as the key to success in South Vietnam. This may be attributable to Taylor's military background, given the fact that the military had long championed the cause of striking at the North, or perhaps he, like Johnson, was in agreement with the "Rostow Thesis". At any rate, Taylor counselled the President to consider regularizing the bombing reprisals. The military also strongly favoured action against the North, albeit with a consistently different view of the concept of operations than most of the civilian elements of the upper echelons of the Johnson Administration. The concepts of gradualism and signalling were inimical to the military point of view; they preferred to affect the will of Hanoi in the traditional military style of hitting hard and hitting everywhere. In other words, the military advocated strategic bombing with its purely military emphasis on physical destruction of the adversary's capacity to resist. Nonetheless, Air Force Chief of Staff General J.P. McConnell described the bombing campaign against the North as an effort at "strategic persuasion" by means of applying measured air power in order to persuade Hanoi to cease its aggressive actions and to come to a negotiated settlement.³⁶

Despite disagreement within the administration on the concept of operations in terms of scope and style - primarily a military-civilian cleavage - it was agreed that applying force against North Vietnam was

³⁵ Papp, Vietnam: the view from Moscow, Peking, Washington, p. 51.

³⁶ Palmer, Summons of the Trumpet, pp. 72-78.

necessary. Along with the agreement to undertake a sustained bombing campaign, there was agreement on the overall objectives. The objectives of "Rolling Thunder", as the bombing programme was called, were as follows: to boost the morale of South Vietnam; to signal Hanoi of American commitment and the threat of increased violence for failure to comply with U.S. settlement terms*; to impose costs on the North for its assistance to the conflict in the South; and finally to create a bargaining position which offered considerable leverage.³⁷

The first phase of "Rolling Thunder" began in the summer of 1965. The target of the first phase of the campaign was the infiltration routes from the North into the South. The selection of the infiltration routes as the target for the initial phase related to the American perception that the primary problem in terms of the war in the South was infiltration from the North. This attitude dated back to the "Flaming Dart" operations that initiated American military actions beyond the DMZ. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to suggest that the concept of operations which underpinned "Rolling Thunder" was supported with unanimity in the Johnson Administration. As previously argued, there was general agreement on two aspects of the bombing cam-

³⁷ See: Lewy, America in Vietnam, p. 374; The Pentagon Papers, p. 269; Palmer, Summons of the Trumpet, pp. 72-78; Littauer, Raphael, Uphoff, Norman, editors, The Air War in Indochina (Air War Study Group, Cornell University), Beacon Press, Boston, 1977, p. 34; Gelb, Leslie H., Betts, Richard K., The Irony Of Vietnam: The System Worked, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C., 1979, pp. 110, 137.

* - The basic conflict termination conditions that the United States stood by were the cessation of North Vietnamese activity of any variety in the South, and an agreement to allow for the non-communist independence of South Vietnam. Rolling Thunder was to give the American bargaining position leverage by creating an extra incentive for Hanoi to comply with Washington's terms.

paing; first, that it was a necessary step in light of American objectives in Vietnam, and, secondly, that the objectives of the bombing were to improve the situation in the South by affecting the North. Where substantial difference arose was over the method of applying force (concept of operations) in the "Rolling Thunder" programme. It was essentially a cleavage of opinion between the military and top level officials in the administration. The military advocated what was termed the "full squeeze" approach, where all potential target-types would be engaged. This concept of operations would include strikes against enemy bridges, lines of communication, industry, and, finally, the mining of North Vietnam's major port facilities.³⁸ The "full squeeze" approach was simply the traditional concept of strategic bombing.

The majority of civilians on the other hand preferred what was called the "progressive squeeze and talk" approach that is more commonly known as gradual escalation. The rationale for applying force in a measured and graduated fashion had several sources. American objectives with respect to the Vietnam conflict operated on two levels, one of which was external to the two Vietnams, and the other which was related to the struggle directly. One level of the conflict operated in an international context. With respect to this level, the careful calibration of the bombing programme was thought essential in order to prevent the intervention of the Chinese. American use of force had to signal the pursuit of limited objectives in two ways: first, that China itself was not threatened; and, secondly, that China's communist neighbor, North Vietnam, was not threatened with

³⁸ Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War", p. 92.

defeat, since the United States did not wish to overthrow the Hanoi regime. The United States wanted to communicate to North Vietnam that a diplomatic solution that reflected the status quo was the ultimate object of American policy and that, therefore, the balance of South-east Asia would not be upset by such a settlement. Of secondary importance in the international context was the desire by the United States to maintain the support of her allies. Restraint was beneficial in this respect as well.³⁹ Graduated escalation was also thought crucial to the other level of the conflict, specifically to affect the conduct of the North Vietnamese. The civilian leadership felt that graduated escalation "would make clear the administration's limited objectives, and by holding North Vietnam's economy hostage to further attacks, would pressure Hanoi into concessions".⁴⁰

The idea of affecting substantial amounts of physical damage on North Vietnam was not considered by the "gradualists" to be a sensible objective and there was considerable resistance to the continual pressure from the JCS to remove the restrictions on the bombing. These restrictions consisted of being forbidden to strike certain types of targets and from striking any targets in certain areas (sanctuaries). The argument of the "gradualists" was that too extensive a bombing programme, aside from the danger of triggering Chinese intervention, would only serve to in effect "kill the hostage", and thus leave the United States without a leveraged bargaining position.⁴¹ Furthermore, massive escalation would defeat the attempt to signal to the North

³⁹ Palmer, Summons of the Trumpet, pp. 76-77.

⁴⁰ Littauer and Uphoff, The Air War in Indochina, p. 35.

⁴¹ Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War, p. 135.

Vietnamese that American objectives were limited and that a diplomatic solution was desired. It is quite clear that those who advocated gradualism wanted to use the bombing programme symbolically to communicate and to compel. The concept of operations which gradualism spawned was, in a sense, a two track-policy of implying further escalation for failure to comply with American terms, and at the same time, a demonstration of restraint as a display of goodwill in order to foster the search for a negotiated settlement.⁴² The attempt to communicate goodwill was made through the use of bombing halts at various stages in the Rolling Thunder programme. The purpose was expressly to signal Hanoi of American desires for a diplomatic solution. As well, it gave Washinton a chance to gauge whether the halts could induce positive gestures from Hanoi.⁴³

The critical question is whether the strategy behind Rolling Thunder produced the desired results. Early expectations that the application of American air power would succeed in affecting the North Vietnamese will were not borne out. The first phase of "Rolling Thunder", which concentrated on infiltration routes, did not measurably affect the ability of the North to move men and supplies south.⁴⁴ More

⁴² Russett, Bruce M., "Vietnam And Restraints On Ariel Warfare", The Bulletin Of The Atomic Scientists, vol. 20 #1, January 12 1970,

The article makes an argument for the goodwill message the restraint was to indicate. It concludes, however, that the message was unclear to the North.

⁴³ Baral, Jaya Krishna, The Pentagon and the Making of U.S. Foreign Policy: A Case Study of Vietnam. 1960-1968, Radiant Publishers, 1978, p. 128; The Pentagon Papers Vol III, p. 274; Gelb and Betts, The Irony of Vietnam, p. 140; Lewy, America in Vietnam, p. 376; Thompson, Rolling Thunder, p. 54.

⁴⁴ Littauer and Uphoff, The Air War in Indochina, p. 46.

importantly, however, the bombing with its implied threat of greater damage to come if American terms were not met, did not compel North Vietnam to alter its actions. A second phase of Rolling Thunder authorized strikes against POL targets (petroleum, oil and lubricants), which the military had long advocated. Again the objective was to impose costs on the North for its actions in the South and affect the will of Hanoi to continue. The escalation did not represent any shift in the concept behind the application of force, only the realization that lower levels of punishment had failed. By 1968, when President Johnson called off the bombing and announced his withdrawal from the Presidential elections, virtually all bombing restrictions had been removed. The targets that the JCS had originally suggested should be engaged had in varying degrees been approved, and all indicators showed that the graduated use of air power to compel North Vietnam to cease its aggression against the South and negotiate an agreement on the basis of terms acceptable to the United States had failed completely. The Tet Offensive of 1968, although a military defeat and potential disaster for the North, marked the end of the American attempt to apply force and "win" the conflict in Vietnam. The incoming Nixon Administration was elected on a platform of ending American involvement in Southeast Asia, and therefore the use of force was oriented to a different end than that of the Johnson period.

It remains to assess the conduct of the war under the Johnson Administration and the problems Vietnam raised in the prosecution of limited war. This will be done by first summarizing the extent to which American strategy in Vietnam reflected concepts to be found in

the limited war literature, and then to examine the tensions, or inconsistencies, between the concepts contained in the limited war literature and the realities of the Vietnam case.

The influence of limited war concepts on the conduct of the Vietnam war is unmistakable. This is not to say that the correlation between limited war theory and the application of force in Vietnam was complete and without problems. In fact the imperfection of the relationship between theory and the Vietnam case is quite evident and has much to do with the American failure in Vietnam. This notwithstanding, both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations viewed Vietnam and the application of force in Southeast Asia in the intellectual context of the debates which led to a limited war strategy replacing the nuclear centred-strategy of the Eisenhower period. It is impossible, therefore, to suggest, however poor the understanding of the assumptions of limited war theory, that American actions did not reflect limited war thinking.

The Kennedy Administration, for example, put great emphasis on the enhancement of American conventional capabilities. This was also coupled with the creation of a counter-insurgency doctrine. Together the acquisition of conventional means, and an operational doctrine for their use, provided the United States with an ability to respond to peripheral conflicts and avoid the reliance on nuclear weapons that had previously been the case. Thus, both force structure and doctrine had been affected by the limited war theory that had so universally criticized the nuclear orientation of American policy in the 1950's. In particular, the Kennedy Administration reflected a central argument

of Henry Kissinger's, in which he asserted that the successful conduct of a limited war required both doctrine and capability. Although American involvement under Kennedy was more circumscribed as compared with Johnson, covert operations under Kennedy bore a resemblance to limited war concepts as well. Another argument that arose out of the limited war literature was that the objective of using doctrine and capability was to invoke deterrence at levels of potential conflict where nuclear weapons could not. The hope of the Kennedy Administration was that covert operations would be a signal to the communists, and that this would in turn affect their calculations; this represented a consistency between the thought processes of the Kennedy Administration with concepts in limited war theory.

The Johnson Administration demonstrated more concretely the influence of limited war concepts. The idea that the calibrated use of force would send a message to the adversary with the effect of altering his actions was also revealed in covert operations under Johnson. This concept of applying military force to signal the adversary of commitment and intentions consistently underpinned the use of overt force as well. As the United States became further involved in Southeast Asia, the definition of American policy in Vietnam also reflected assumptions contained in limited war theory, specifically the unilateralists's concept of a direct relationship between ends and means. The American leadership assumed they were pursuing limited objectives, and as a result it was felt that the means applied to achieve such objectives had to be limited as well. The calibration of force that was characteristic of the strategic concept of flexible response doc-

trine under both Kennedy and Johnson clearly reflected this theoretical assumption. Not only did statements of American objectives in Vietnam by the Johnson administration demonstrate this assumption, so to did the application of force in a measured and gradual fashion. The application of carefully calibrated force was intended as a signal of limited objectives and the desire to use limited means to achieve them. Finally, and this presents one of the critical problems of American strategy in Vietnam, the application of force reflected the unilateralism that had its roots in the more popular of the two models of limited war.

Despite the obvious influence of limited war theory on the conduct of the Vietnam war, there existed some fundamental tensions between theory and practice as demonstrated by the Vietnam case. One might begin first and foremost, for example, by suggesting that the Vietnam case violated a central assumption of the entire literature on limited war. There was one critical assumption which underwrote not only the nuclear oriented strategy of Eisenhower, but the critics of Massive Retaliation as well, and, therefore, one which carried over into limited war theory. It was assumed through the 1950's that communism was a monolithic force.⁴⁵ The Sino-Soviet dispute which would later demonstrate that international communism was not an undifferentiated movement which took its direction from Moscow was not a component of the strategic outlook of Eisenhower or the limited war theorists. Implicit in all the limited war literature, therefore, was the assumption that it was ultimately the Soviet Union that would be the adversary in a limited conflict. The fact that the Soviet Union was not the prin-

⁴⁵ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, See chapter 1.

cial adversary in Vietnam, and perhaps not an adversary at all, except in the minds of the Americans, had grave implications for the application of limited strategy in the conflict. To see where difficulties arise it is important to analyze the relationship between the actual adversaries in Vietnam and how this corresponded to limited war theory.

The issue of the nature and relationship of adversaries was a critical problem in the Vietnam case and represents one of the fundamental tensions between theory and practice as illustrated by American involvement in Southeast Asia. The first aspect of the adversary issue is the question of who the enemy was in the Vietnam war. A consistent and simple answer to this question does not exist. As the Southeast Asia problem unfolded throughout the 1950's and 1960's, the focus of American attention shifted.⁴⁶ Initially, the ultimate enemy in Southeast Asia was the Soviet Union. Throughout the 1950's and early 1960's it was assumed that unrest in Vietnam was the product of a Soviet orchestrated peripheral challenge. Under Eisenhower there was little reason for this assumption to be questioned. Although in Korea the United States fought directly with the Chinese, it was thought that it was ultimately Moscow that was behind the Chinese. Under Kennedy the perception that the Soviets were the inspiring force behind the local combatants began to change. Initially, as a result of Cuba and Khrushchev's "wars of liberation speech", it was assumed that the Soviet Union was behind the insurgency in South Vietnam.⁴⁷ In

⁴⁶ Kail, What Washington Said, See Chapter II, "Who is the Enemy?", pp. 18-35.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

the later part of the Kennedy Administration, but more concretely in the Johnson Administration, the Soviet Union was downplayed as the principal threat and China was then portrayed as the ultimate problem in Southeast Asia. As for North Vietnam, it was always seen as part of the problem in terms of its involvement in the Vietnam situation. Prior to 1965, however, North Vietnam's role was characterized as one of supporting the insurgency in the South. After 1965, the United States viewed North Vietnam as a direct participant, and, in fact, primarily responsible for the unrest in the South.⁴⁸

If one assumes that by 1965 (the year that the United States committed itself to major military action), the Soviet Union was not regarded as a central problem, two possible enemies were left to consider: the Chinese and the North Vietnamese. The problem of two adversaries was compounded by two sets of political objectives; first, the immediate and limited political objective of maintaining the integrity of South Vietnam, and, secondly, the objective of sending a message to allies, but more importantly, a message to potential adversaries such as China or the Soviet Union that the United States would and could defend at the periphery. The result of the two potential adversaries in the conflict - one actual and the other potential - and the existence of two sets of political objectives on the part of the Americans meant, in essence, that the conflict operated on two levels.⁴⁹ The two level nature of the Vietnam conflict is not consistent with the central assumption of limited war theory that the United

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁹ Hoffmann, Stanley, Huntington, Samuel P., May, Ernest R., Neustadt, Richard N., Schelling, Thomas C., "Vietnam Reappraised", International Security, vol. 6 #1, Summer 1981, p. 3.

States would be opposed by a symmetrical power, specifically the Soviet Union. This particular "tension" between theory and the Vietnam case, because it is a fundamental inconsistency, posed problems for the successful conduct of limited war in Southeast Asia. If the clear communication of limited objectives and the terms for the termination of the conflict was to be made, careful attention to the target of the message would be critical. With two separate targets and two sets of objectives, however, the successful communication of messages was very much in doubt. Some greater detail on this problem is warranted.

The first critical issue to investigate with respect to the Vietnam case is the issue which also dominated the limited war literature as well; what was the "mechanism" of limitation in the Vietnam conflict? The mechanism of limitation had to be either the ends that the United States pursued or the means that were sanctioned for the achievement of American political objectives. From the point of view of the Americans, the critical limiting factor in Vietnam were the political objectives to be pursued. The Americans wished to communicate to Hanoi, the Chinese, and the Soviet Union that American objectives were limited. The United States wanted it made clear that it did not wish to depose the regime in the North or accrue territory or bases for itself; but instead, simply to ensure the survival of South Vietnam as an independent non-communist state⁵⁰ Along with limited objectives,

⁵⁰ Porter, Vietnam: A History in Documents, "Memorandum From Vietnam Desk Officer Joseph A. Mendenhall To U. Alexis Johnson, June 1, 1964", pp. 271-275.

This was a briefing document for Canadian interlocutor J. Blair Seaborne outlining what the Americans wished to be directly communicated to Hanoi. It was stressed that the nature of American objectives be made clear to the North Vietnamese.

the Americans felt that means must be commensurate with ends. The idea that American political objectives were limited in the context of the first level of the conflict - that of the desire only to defend the South and not depose the communist regime in the North - seems quite reasonable. The problem arises, however, when one considers the second level of the conflict - the international context - and the objective of sending a message about American resolve and capacity to resist piecemeal aggression at the periphery. From this perspective Vietnam comes to symbolize the United State's defence of its position as the leader and guarantor of Western security. It can be argued that this cannot be portrayed as a particularly limited objective by any standard.

The whole issue with regard to whether American objectives in Vietnam could be seen as limited is brought into focus by a comment of Thomas Schelling's made in criticism of the idea that limited war would be distinguished by the limited objective sought by adversaries in conflict. Schelling used Korea as the example and argued that while the immediate military goals sought in a limited conflict might indeed be limited and meet American objectives, this was unlikely to be the case in terms of the overall significance of the conflict. What the conflict would be about, Schelling argued, was the defence of the American position vis-a-vis the Soviet bloc.⁵¹ Leslie Gelb argued that this was precisely the predicament in Vietnam;

⁵¹ Schelling, Thomas C., Limited War, from a lecture to the National War College, November 18 1959, mimeographed by the Harvard University Center for International Affairs. (cited from Halperin, Morton H., Limited War: An Essay on the Development of the Theory and an Annotated Bibliography, Harvard University Center for International Affairs, p. 39 #248)

(w)hile the objective of a non-communist Vietnam was specific, our leaders did not want to employ maximum force to achieve it...But unlimited objectives, in time, are bound to call for unlimited means....⁵²

Thus, it might have been the case that while the United States thought it had limited objectives in Vietnam, the reality of the situation was that the United States was engaged in the pursuit of the far less limited objective of demonstrating it could defend the Western security position at the periphery. It was clearly the case that Vietnam had come to be viewed in the fashion in which Americans traditionally viewed conflicts; that of a challenge to the security of the United States. The domino theory was built around the proposition that failure in Vietnam meant the loss of Southeast Asia, which in turn would lead to an assault on the Western position elsewhere. As Thomas Schelling had argued in his rejection of the limiting mechanism assumptions of the unilateralist model, while American military objectives in Vietnam might have been limited, the political objectives were wide in scope.⁵³ A misunderstanding of this type would serve to complicate, if not compromise, the process of applying force in a fashion that would adequately achieve political objectives.

The two-level nature of the conflict also affected the relationship between adversaries in a way that made the conduct of a limited war problematic. Another assumption of limited war theory, irrespective of what "mechanism" of limitation was thought to be operating, was the degree of symmetry between adversaries in their perceptions of the conflict. Agreement between the adversaries over limitations, the

⁵² Gelb, Leslie H., "The Essential Domino: American Politics and Vietnam", Foreign Affairs, vol. 50 #1, April 1972, p. 463.

⁵³ See chapter II p. ?

extent of acceptable escalation, and of the conditions for termination, all require some degree of commonalty between the parties to a limited conflict. The Vietnam case presents problems with respect to this issue. The United States had convinced itself that Vietnam was a limited conflict, and therefore viewed the conflict, correctly or not, from this perspective. Holding a view of the conflict as limited would logically affect the conduct of the conflict for the Americans. The same, however, was true for the adversary. If the adversary's view is different, grave problems arise in applying force as a signalling instrument. China, America's so-called potential enemy, was not involved in a combat role. From this perspective one could only argue that they would perceive their stake in Vietnam as limited. Difficulty arises, however, when one considers the position of the second adversary, North Vietnam. Here the United States tragically misunderstood the conflict as viewed from Hanoi, and the results were tremendous;

(i)nsurgencies are total from the perpetrator's standpoint, without any "stupid scruples" as Mao once said. Uncle Ho therefore strained to expand the conflict, while Uncle Sam strained to limit it.⁵⁴

Between the United States and the adversary it had to confront directly, a symmetry of view on the nature of the conflict was absent.

The idea that the way in which force is applied can constitute a signal to the adversary of commitment and intentions was not foreign to limited war theory. When Thomas Schelling discussed the "tacit coordination of interests" and the requirement to "bind" or commit oneself in order to be able to engage in a bargaining process, it was

⁵⁴ Collins, John M., "Vietnam Post Mortem: A Senseless Strategy", Parameters, vol. 8 # 1, p. 11.

precisely about the symbolic use of force as a demonstrative instrument.⁵⁵ The American idea, therefore, to use force as a method of signalling to Hanoi both threat and restraint was consistent with the limited war literature. The problem with using force as a signalling instrument was not an incorrect perception about the feasibility of using force in such a manner under certain conditions, but that to do so in Vietnam would be to misapply a good strategy in the wrong conflict. The asymmetry of aims between Hanoi and Washington caused American signals to be either imperceptible or to be read by Hanoi with a different meaning than was intended. The failure to perceive the asymmetry of aims, and the effect this would have on the nature of the conflict, specifically with regard to a strategy of signalling, was a clear illustration of American affinity with the unilateralist model of limited war.

The strategy of gradual escalation provides a good example of the difficulties raised for communication when adversaries have asymmetrical aims and perceptions of a conflict. Gradual escalation was the overarching concept of applying force in order to signal American commitments, threats, and restraint. The critical issue is whether the strategy of gradualism in the application of force communicated the intended message to the adversary. Although it is impossible to substantiate, it is possible to argue that American gradualism got the intended message of limited objectives and the desire for restraint.

⁵⁵ Schelling, Thomas C., The Strategy Of Conflict, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960, See pp. 22-28 for a discussion of the requirement to bind or commit oneself in order to be able to engage in a bargaining process. Also see; Chapter 1 part 3 "Bargaining, Communication and Limited War" for a discussion of the "tacit coordination of interests".

and negotiation through to the Chinese. The assertion would be that if the Chinese perceived otherwise, and was thus threatened itself by unlimited American objectives, they would have intervened more directly in the conflict. With respect to North Vietnam, however, the strategy of gradualism was not a successful signalling device, precisely because of the asymmetry that existed between the North Vietnamese and the Americans. Given the fact that for North Vietnam the conflict was total, the policy of gradualism resulted in two things; first, that the message of American resolve and commitment was not interpreted by Hanoi as the United States intended, and, secondly, it failed as a way of gradually increasing the pressure on the North in order to compel Hanoi to change its activities in the South.⁵⁶ The message which Hanoi received from gradualism, as Leslie Gelb saw it, was that the United States was in fact very reluctant to escalate;

(t)he "slow squeeze" approach showed Hanoi two things. On the one hand, it signalled that America would always do more militarily, while on the other, it revealed that the President would not do all that was necessary to win. A step-by-step strategy of threat can spring either from conviction or endemic weakness.⁵⁷

Hanoi interpreted gradualism as endemic weakness. The other aspect of the problem of gradualism was that it relinquished the initiative to North Vietnam.⁵⁸ Hanoi came to understand that it controlled the pressure the Americans applied. Thus, the North could adjust its actions accordingly.

⁵⁶ Gelb, "The Essential Domino", p. 468; Gelb and Betts, The Irony of Vietnam, pp. 114-15; Hoffmann, Et. Al., "Vietnam Reappraised", p. 8; Lewy, America in Vietnam, p. 393; Littauer and Uphoff, The Air War in Indochina, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Gelb, "The Essential Domino", p. 468.

⁵⁸ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 251.

In making an overall assessment of the significance of Vietnam as a test case for the American concept of limited war two central points can be made; one with respect to the general strategy of limited war, and the other with respect to the specific model of limited war favoured by the United States. As argued in chapter 1, the doctrine of limited war, as with the doctrines that preceded it, reflected American historical experience.⁵⁹ The American tendency to conceive of its security as an absolute value led to the prediction to view strategic doctrine as a panacea for security problems. By defining security in terms of absolutes the logical result was to define security threats in absolute terms as well. The problem of American strategic doctrine, consequently, was that it was not conducive to differentiating among various types of threats and varying degrees of threat.⁶⁰ Even though the strategic concept of flexible response, as a reaction to the undifferentiating strategy of massive retaliation, was intended to take into account differing degrees of threat, the American perception of Vietnam raises some doubts. Although it was recognized that Vietnam in and of itself did not present a direct challenge to American security, the Domino Theory managed to link the problem of Vietnam to the overall balance between East and West. In the end, therefore, the strategy of limited war, despite its adherence to the concept of calibrated force commensurate with the challenge at hand, failed to break the American problem of defining its security and threats to it in absolute terms. In this respect Vietnam reflects the continuation of

⁵⁹ See chapter one pp. 42-44.

⁶⁰ Shy, John, "The American Military Experience: History and Learning", Journal Of Inter-Disciplinary History, Vol.1 #2 Winter 1971, p. 225.

the American way of war in the nuclear age under the guise of a new strategic doctrine.

The second significant aspect of Vietnam in terms of limited war strategy has to do with the particular model of limited war which the United States favoured as a result of its historical experience. Of the two models, the conduct of the Vietnam war displayed the influence of the unilateral model of limited war most. Adherence to this model was illustrated by the way in which the United States perceived the Vietnam War to be a limited conflict. In the same vein, the strategy of escalation dominance, although intended as a signalling strategy, was also unilateral in that the communication process was one way. This fact was well illustrated by the complete inability of the Americans to recognize that the adversary they were actually fighting did not view the conflict in at all a similar fashion.⁶¹ The aims of the United States and the Vietnamese communists were entirely irreconcilable, and consequently the messages taken by the North, if they were received at all, were not the messages intended. Conversely, the very nature of the communication channel that escalation dominance implied did not allow the United States to interpret North Vietnamese actions. As a result, the rules of the conflict, and the terms for its termination, were not the result of interactive bargaining, but rather an attempt by the United States to dictate them.

What Vietnam demonstrated conclusively was not that the strategy of limited war, and its attendant concepts of force application, was inapplicable, but that they were applied in the wrong conflict. In a

⁶¹ Deweerd, Harvey A., "Strategic Decision Making In Vietnam", Yale Review: A National Quarterly, Summer 1978, p. 483.

situation where two adversaries hold a symmetrical view, and similar desires to limit the scope of the conflict, then limited war strategy may be highly appropriate. It is likely the case however, that the interactive model of limited war is better suited to such conflicts because of its recognition of the need for adversaries to engage in a dynamic and highly interactive process of communication. The failure of limited war strategy in Vietnam condemned it so thoroughly that it has not been a part of strategic debate through the 1970's and 1980's. Recently, there has been discussion in the United States which has led to new service doctrines to take into account the changes that have occurred to the strategic environment since the end of Vietnam. Chapter IV will assess this issue.

Chapter IV

AFTER VIETNAM: AMERICAN STRATEGY FOR PERIPHERAL CONFLICT

The purpose of this chapter will be to assess the post-Vietnam era; specifically, the concern is to relate limited war thinking to the development of American defence policy through the 1970's and the 1980's. The chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will deal with the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations. The rationale for grouping these administrations is derived from a common thread which ran through each. All these administrations governed through a period in which domestic opinion was hostile with respect to defence matters. Support for both high levels of defence spending and for significant aspects of America's global commitments was difficult if not impossible to muster. These three administrations, therefore, were similar in that they were forced to manage the security policy of the United States in a period where a vigorous military policy was not an option.

Analysis will begin with the Nixon Doctrine announced on Guam in 1969. Although the Vietnam war continued until 1973, starting the so-called post Vietnam assessment with the Nixon Doctrine is defensible. The Nixon administration was elected to office on a platform of ending American involvement in Vietnam. American military actions, therefore, were significant in their effort to extract the United States from the conflict in a fashion that was seen to be honourable,

and, in a way that would prevent a crisis of confidence among U.S. allies. Clearly, these objectives were different from those of the Johnson administration. The significance of the Nixon Doctrine has to do with its intellectual centrality in the post-Vietnam development of American defence policy, specifically with regard to containment strategy for the periphery.

The Ford administration can be argued to have logically extended the approach of President Nixon. This is likely due in no small way to the continued presence of Henry Kissinger, who was a principal architect of Nixon administration security policy. President Carter, on the other hand, attempted to redefine the American approach to East-West politics in a way which neither Ford nor Nixon tried, or, in all likelihood, would have thought prudent. By the end of his tenure as President, Carter was forced to return to a familiar and more conventional attitude toward the Soviet Union. In fact the military resurgence of the United States has its roots in the Carter Administration. This resurgence included two factors that have become hallmarks of current trends in American defence thinking; firstly, a concern over the ability of the United States to meet potential Soviet challenges with an adequate conventional response, and, secondly, the "regionalization" of American security interests. In the case of the former, Carter's creation of the Rapid Deployment Force indicated the concern over U.S. conventional capabilities, and in the case of the latter, the so-called Carter Doctrine raised the Gulf region to a level of high priority in American regional security interests previously accorded only to Europe.

Although international events in the latter part of the Carter presidency began the re-awakening of American concern for the military aspect of the East-West balance, the Reagan administration has, for the most part, presided over the military resurgence of the United States. The Reagan administration, therefore, will be the focus of the second section of the chapter. The central theme of this section will be that, despite the fact that the changes in the strategic environment which affect current military policy were a product of the 1970's, developments under the Reagan administration in the 1980's have been of greater significance in terms of American defence strategy. It will be argued that a tension has been created between declared alliance strategy and new service doctrines that have been tabled under the Reagan Administration. Furthermore, these new military doctrines (AirLand Battle and the Maritime Strategy), imply a shift in the type of deterrence that the United States seeks to apply to its regional concerns. With respect to the concept of force application, the service doctrines are based on horizontal escalation and war-fighting, and do not incorporate any aspects of limited war strategy that were previously thought appropriate to regional conflict.

The challenges laid before the Nixon administration, both in direct relation to Vietnam and to general security issues as well, were both numerous and complex. One might argue convincingly that as Vietnam had come to symbolize the international position and policies of the United States, by the failure of American policy in Vietnam, it had also come to symbolize the bankruptcy of traditional containment thinking. New approaches to the containment of the Soviet Union were

a necessity, and, given the jaundiced nature of domestic opinion after Vietnam, these new approaches necessarily required a redefinition of military posture. The Nixon administration's view of the strategy problem in the post-Vietnam era was underwritten by an assumption about what had previously been the "ends" of American policy and what "means" were realistically available for policy implementation. Simply put, it was assumed that the United States had over-extended itself. Whereas the Kennedy/Johnson administration had assumed that American capabilities were virtually unlimited, Nixon thought the opposite, and, therefore, commitments ought to be realigned to be commensurate with the means available to support them. The Nixon Doctrine was underwritten by this line of reasoning.¹

In July of 1969, while hostilities still raged in Southeast Asia, Nixon offered a new set of principles, now known as the Nixon Doctrine, that would govern American involvement globally. The doctrine consisted of three propositions;

First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments. Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security.

Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish economic and military assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.²

¹ Etzold, Thomas H., Defense or Delusion?, Harper & Row, New York, 1983, p. 20.

² Gaddis, John Lewis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982, p. 298.

Despite the conviction that the United States was over-extended, the first two propositions of the doctrine were in reality a continuation of previous policy. In a way, the Nixon administration's predicament was analogous to that of the Kennedy administration. In both cases it was recognized that the United States had committed itself unwisely; however, once a commitment was made, withdrawing from it was extremely difficult.

For both administrations, Southeast Asia presented a vivid example of the problem. For Kennedy, the Eisenhower administration's link to Southeast Asia through SEATO, and its involvement in the Indochina conflict during the French period made it difficult to avoid an increased role in Vietnam. For Nixon, the problem still lay in Vietnam, but this time it related to withdrawal from the Kennedy/Johnson administration's military commitment. In both instances the concern was about a crisis in international stability; what message would be taken by allies and adversaries in the face of American abrogation of earlier commitments? It was not that the international order would collapse immediately in the wake of American renunciation of some of its international commitments; but rather, that such renunciations would affect the perceived balance of power between East and West. The impression would be given that the United States was not the preeminent global power, and that it could no longer be relied upon to be the guarantor of Western security.³

³ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 307.

Irrespective of the unwillingness or inability to "downsize" American global commitments, the Nixon Doctrine was a signal of the desire for change, not in objectives, but in method.⁴ The third proposition was an unmistakable change in the way that the United States would utilize its armed forces. In the type of peripheral challenge where limited war strategy was previously applied, the new American response would be to secure its political and security objectives by the use of proxies.⁵ Under the terms of this strategy of response, indigenous forces would have to do the actual fighting and the United States would supply economic and military assistance. This approach to peripheral conflict well illustrates the argument that the Nixon Doctrine was a change in methods rather than objectives. Clearly, the Nixon administration still viewed communist activity in the Third World as inimical to American security interests, and, therefore, the traditional objective of seeking to contain such activity remained a cornerstone of security policy. Given the declared desire to adopt a different method of peripheral containment, it was natural that military responses were not particularly popular, and, therefore, limited war strategy faded from view.

In a way, the fate of limited war strategy was sealed for two reasons; first, given the climate of domestic public opinion in the post-Vietnam period, to advance limited war ideas would be an extreme political liability, and secondly, the security by proxy thrust of the

⁴ Gurtov, Melvin, in Zacher, Mark W., Milne, Stephen R., "Security by Proxy: The Nixon Doctrine and Southeast Asia", Conflict and Stability in Southeast Asia, Anchor Press/Doubleday, New York, 1974, p. 204.

⁵ Ibid., p. 204.

Nixon Doctrine undermined the rationale behind limited war strategy. The concepts that underwrote limited war strategy were the product of the assumption that the United States would be directly involved in peripheral conflicts. Limited war strategy, as the Americans perceived it, was not a "generic" strategy, but rather, a response to the particular security dilemma that faced the United States. For example, the idea of using force in a measured fashion to signal restraint, both for bargaining purposes and to avoid the intervention of the communist powers, only made sense in the context of direct American involvement. If indigenous forces were providing the first line of defence, many, if not most, of the problems associated with American involvement would not exist, or, at least be far less salient.

While the Nixon Doctrine represented the expression of a desire to approach peripheral security in a new way - specifically in a fashion that undercut the need for limited war strategy as demonstrated by Vietnam - there were concrete examples in other aspects of policy that illustrated the abandonment of limited war thinking. Aside from the elusive but influential constraining role of domestic and international opinion, new institutional restraints in the 1970's affected the potential to successfully conduct a limited war on the periphery. The institutional restraints were manifested in two ways; first, by the congressional encroachment on the president's war-making powers, and secondly, by force structure and planning within the Pentagon and the armed forces.⁶ With respect to presidential war powers, the notable

⁶ See: Cohen, Eliot A., "Constraints of America's Conduct of Small Wars", International Security, vol. 9 # 2, Fall 1984, pp. 151-181.

landmark of the 1970's was the "War Powers Act" which put a sixty day limit of the deployment of troops abroad without congressional approval. It was not that the War Powers Act made the conduct of a limited war impossible, but highly improbable given the attitudes in Congress after the Vietnam War. The institutional restraint on the President's ability to deploy troops overseas was an illustration of the political inappropriateness of limited war strategy in the post-Vietnam period.

The second form of institutional restraint related directly to military planning and force structure. The Vietnam experience was as traumatic for the military as it was for the American population as a whole. The military, who were never willing proponents of limited war strategy, abandoned limited war thinking without any difficulty or regrets. Conventional force planning returned to focus on the European theatre of operations in which conflict was expected to be total and, consistent with American and NATO strategy, a conflict where conventional forces would be linked to the other available military means.⁷ Specifically, it was assumed that the use of conventional force in Europe would be linked to, and augmented by, American nuclear forces during a time of crisis. The emphasis in force structure through the 1970's was one of heavily equipped troops in both the armour and infantry branches. The Special Forces, which had been a high profile organization in the early 1960's when limited war thinking was

⁷ Coker, Christopher, U.S. Military Strategy In The 1980's, Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1983, p. 15; Record, Jeffrey, in Clark, Asa A., Chiarelli, Peter W., McKittrick, Jeffrey S., Reed, James W., The Defense Reform Debate: Issues and Analysis, The Johns Hopkins University Press, London, 1984, p. 148; Sarkesian, Sam C., in Sarkesian, Sam C., Scully, William W., Potentials For Military Struggles In The 1980's: U.S. Policy and Low-Intensity Conflict, Transaction Books, London, 1981, pp. 8-9.

in vogue, declined in strength considerably through the 1970's. Overall, the 1970's was a period of decline in the conventional capabilities of the United States. The shrinking of conventional capabilities, aside from the political inappropriateness of limited war strategy, made the pursuit of military containment at the periphery operationally unfeasible without substantially compromising other commitments.

The replacement of limited war thinking with new methods of managing problems at the periphery was also demonstrated in the policies of the Nixon and Ford administrations. Detente, for example, represented in the broad context the shift from peripheral containment dominated by military measures to a strategy of diplomatic and economic methods. The concept of linkage, whereby the Soviets would be induced to alter their activities in the Third World in order to attain benefits in other areas, was specifically oriented to impose stability at the periphery by non-military means.⁸ In a situation where the Soviets stood to lose valued trade, technology, and agreements on arms control for supporting conflict on the periphery, Nixon and Kissinger reasoned that the Soviets would, in essence, contain themselves. If this linkage strategy were successful there would be no need for an American military posture toward peripheral conflict, and hence, little need for limited war strategy.

The linkage concept, as the 1970's amply demonstrated, was not guaranteed to succeed. Angola provided an example of a peripheral conflict situation which went counter to the detente strategy of link-

⁸ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, Chapter IX "Nixon, Kissinger, and Detente", pp. 274-308.

age. What is significant, however, was the American response to the crisis. As implied by the Nixon Doctrine, the United States viewed the use of Cuban troops by the Soviets as challenge to American security interests. The attempt to affect the outcome of the conflict did not include direct military involvement on the part of the United States. Also, in a manner consistent with the Nixon Doctrine, the Americans supported proxy forces. Congress acted as a restraint on these activities, as they would in subsequent attempts by the executive to use proxy forces, and thereby demonstrated its profound reluctance to become involved in adventurous policies in the Third World.⁹ Clearly the intellectual climate had changed since the highpoint of limited war thinking in the 1960's. A situation is similar to Angola in an earlier time likely would have elicited a far more forceful American response. In all probability, one that might have included military force. There can be no denying that both the political impossibility of committing forces to a peripheral conflict and the genuine shift in official thinking had removed limited war concepts from the menu of American strategy.

For all intents and purposes, the Ford administration simply represented an extension of the trends which began in the Nixon administration. Ford operated under the same constraints, both domestic and international, and also operated under the influence of the principal architect of preceding security policy, Henry Kissinger. The same cannot be said of the Carter administration. In some respects Carter did extend some of the developments of the previous two Republican administrations. As with Nixon and Ford, defence policy under Carter

⁹ Ibid., pp. 331-332.

continued to focus on the European theatre. Security assistance programmes to countries of interest to the United States continued, but Carter took the trends in security assistance of the Nixon Administration and furthered them. Whereas Nixon had decreased funding, he battled with a Congress that desired even more restraint. Carter, on the other hand, made the restraint that Congress was advocating a matter of executive policy.¹⁰ As well, Carter attempted to continue the detente process of arms control and negotiated a second SALT treaty, although it was subsequently not ratified by the Senate. In other respects the Carter administration approached the entire East-West political relationship in a manner quite at odds with the preceding administrations.

In the early period of his presidency, Carter advanced the argument that for too long American foreign policy had "turned on a Soviet axis". According to Carter's argument, this led to a preoccupation with the Soviet Union and with issues of security and defence at the expense of issues of human rights and economic development. The Carter administration consciously looked to other aspects of American foreign policy and, much to the confusion of the Soviets and the frustration of the allies, injected the human rights issue into the centre of East-West security negotiations. The administration also identified itself with academics like Klaus Knorr who argued that the utility of military force was declining rapidly, especially with respect to peripheral conflicts.¹¹ A differing perception of the proper context

¹⁰ Schultz, Richard, "Low Intensity Conflict and American Strategy in the 1980's", Conflict Quarterly, vol. 2 #3, Winter 1982, p. 16.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

of East-West relations, the proper focus of foreign policy, and a disinclination to view military force as a legitimate tool of national policy, resulted in a less urgent view of traditional national security issues.

International events, however, overtook the administration's relatively relaxed view of security matters. Two events can be identified which caused the Carter administration to reverse its attitudes; the first was the Iran hostage crisis, and the second was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Iran hostage crisis was a blow to American pride, and the failed rescue attempt seemed to demonstrate the military impotence of the United States. The perceived military inability of the United States in the face of a challenge by a far weaker power had a profound affect on American attitudes. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was even more significant, and the two events combined, served as a stimulus for greater concern and interest in security matters in both public and official forums. In the first instance, the prevailing opinion in the United States was that military force had lost its utility. Afghanistan, however, appeared to suggest that the Soviet Union did not share the same conviction. Furthermore, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan raised the spectre of the application of Soviet force outside of the European theatre. Specifically, it was impossible to ignore the prospect of a real Soviet challenge to critical American interests in the Middle East. Carter's benign approach to security matters that had been typical of his early presidency shifted to one of increasing stridency. In a statement that became known as the Carter Doctrine, the President made it clear that any

attempt by an outside power to gain control of the Gulf region would be considered to be an assault on a vital American interest.¹² President Carter had gone from trying to stop American foreign policy from "turning on a Soviet axis" to describing the gravest threat to international security as being embodied in Soviet policy.

Carter's response to the apparent increased Soviet threat in the Gulf region was the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). In reality the operational effectiveness of the force, given its mission of defeating a Soviet ground invasion of the Gulf region, was very much in doubt. To achieve such a mission would require a substantial increase in all elements of American conventional forces. The period of decline in the early 1970's made the commitment of sizable ground troops outside of Europe very difficult. The RDF began initially with only 100,000 troops, but more importantly, all the troop formations were primary-tasked in the European theatre. Despite an increase in size to 200,000 men, the RDF still faced the problem of its units being double tasked and, therefore, the RDF could be activated only at the expense of American forces in the European theatre.¹³ From an operational point of view, therefore, the RDF was not a particularly effective force for either deterring the Soviets, or in the event of an invasion, providing any meaningful defence of American interests in the region. In spite of all of its problems, the creation of the RDF was significant because it signalled the emergence of the United States from the complete unwillingness to address problems of periph-

¹² U.S. Defense Policy, Congressional Quarterly Inc., Washington D.C., p. 180.

¹³ Etzold, Defense or Delusion?, pp. 205-210.

eral conflict that was a product of the trauma of Vietnam. It was becoming evident that the Soviet Union was capable of threatening American interests outside of Europe and that the periphery was once again presenting itself as a security problem. In light of the changed strategic environment of the late 1970's, new strategies of military containment that took into account the current military relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union would be required. While the reversal of thinking in the Carter administration represented the beginnings of America's military resurgence, it is the Reagan administration that has been most significant in the development of American security strategy for the future.

A central theme of Ronald Reagan's election campaign had been the need to address the decline in America's global status and return the United States to prominence internationally. A significant component of Reagan's desire for the global resurgence of the United States was the reconstruction of American military strength. Thus, it is not surprising, therefore, that the Reagan Administration raised the issue of military strategy to its highest level of discussion since the end of the Vietnam War. Under Reagan the Services began doctrinal revision in order to take into account the changes that have occurred in the military relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union. These new service doctrines (AirLand Battle {Army} Maritime Strategy {Navy}) have been the source of some controversy, both within the United States and elsewhere. Both service doctrines are to differing degrees at odds with elements of American extended deterrence strategy as it presently has been articulated. These service doctrines have

become all the more controversial in light of arms control developments in Europe. The INF treaty, and its potential ramifications for the defence of Europe, has provided new impetus to the historical debate about the role of nuclear weapons in the defence of Europe. A tendency to de-emphasize nuclear weapons in the extension of deterrence beyond American shores has been a notable development in recent years.¹⁴ The current situation is such that a tension exists between the declared strategy for extended deterrence and the concepts of force application contained in the new service doctrines. Before going into some detail on the concept of force application in the service doctrines, and the relevance of limited war strategy in relation to them, it is important to outline the changes in the strategic environment that have affected their development.

In the first instance, the most dramatic change in the strategic environment has been the military decline of the United States in relation to the Soviet Union. The implications of this for American defence policy are substantial. American strategy over the past forty years has evolved from a strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union where the United States was clearly dominant in which it is possible to argue that the Soviet Union may be slightly ahead. Historically, despite the traditional Soviet superiority in conventional forces, the centrality of nuclear weapons in overall balance was thought to confer a position of superiority to the

¹⁴ See: Ikle', Fred C., Wohlstetter, Albert, Co-Chairmen, Discriminate Deterrence: Report of the Commission On Integrated Long-Term Strategy Gray, Colin, The Maritime Strategy: Geopolitics and the Defense of the West, Ramapo Press, New York, 1986; Hanks, Robert J., Record, Jeffrey, U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads: Two Views, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Cambridge Massachusetes, 1982.

United States. With strategic parity between the United States and the Soviet Union institutionalized by the SALT agreements, the correlation of military power between East and West was substantially altered. It was felt that by the early 1980's that the balance had shifted to one of slight Soviet superiority at the strategic level, coupled with the traditional Soviet superiority at the conventional level.¹⁵ Beyond the general correlation of forces, a specific aspect of the changed balance was the increased ability of the Soviet Union to project its power globally. This threat had two components; first, the ability of the Soviet Union to project force on a wider scale due an enhanced naval capability, and, secondly, the expansion of Soviet basing facilities throughout the Third World.¹⁶

Although the United States was still a superior naval power to the Soviet Union, the advantage had been lessened by the Soviet expansion of its capabilities. Furthermore, it was argued that there was an asymmetry in the required naval strategies of the two superpowers. Whereas the United States was required to seek a "sea control" capability, the Soviet Union, because of her interior lines of communication and inherent status as a land power, was only required to achieve a "sea denial" capacity.¹⁷ Naturally a sea denial capability was less burdensome to attain and perpetuate than a sea control navy. The second aspect of the geographically expanded nature of the Soviet threat

¹⁵ Report of the Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger to the Congress, Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 1984, p. 34.

¹⁶ This theme is stressed and repeated in subsequent reports of the Secretary of Defense to Congress. See: *Ibid.*, Fiscal Year 1985, pp. 25-26, Fiscal Year 1986, pp. 19-20, Fiscal Year 1987, pp. 67-68.

¹⁷ Coker, Military Strategy in the 1980's, p. 12.

was increased Soviet basing facilities. With increased access to base facilities in the Third World, the Soviet Union's capacity to project power on a global basis was critically enhanced. This changed military balance between the United States and the Soviet Union by itself would, therefore, have dramatic effects and, therefore, necessitate some reconsideration of American defence policy. What made such a defence review even more pressing was that the relative decline of the United States in relation to the Soviets militarily was not the only change in the strategic environment.

A second significant development in the strategic environment was the increased military capacity of peripheral states. While the insurgencies that had dominated the 1950's and 1960's are still a part of peripheral conflict in the 1980's, the threat posed by conventionally armed regional powers is a factor of new proportion in the 1980's. The transfer of military technology from the developed world, both East and West, to the Third World has altered the relationship between these countries and any outside power that might intervene in a regional conflict.¹⁸ If the United States were to enter into a peripheral conflict in the 1980's there is a real possibility it would not face a militarily weak insurgent movement, but, rather, a small conventional army of a regional power equipped with sophisticated weaponry.¹⁹ The implication of this possible scenario is that American projection of superior force would be far more difficult. The United States, in a conflict with a relatively well armed regional power,

¹⁸ Trager and Scully, in Sarkesian and Scully, Potentials for Military Struggles in the 1980's, p. 190; Discriminate Deterrence, p. 9.

¹⁹ Cohen, "Constraints on America's Conduct of Small Wars", p. 162.

would have to interject with substantially greater resources at the outset of its involvement than had been the necessary in many of its earlier endeavors. Furthermore, the resupply and combat support problem in the context of high technology warfare with a regional power would be substantial.

If the United States faces increased challenges at the periphery by both the Soviet Union and regional powers, American capacity to support conventional operations becomes a matter of great significance. The requirements for combat resupply and combat support operations, both air and naval, are secure and contiguous basing facilities and overflight rights. Another change in the strategic environment of the 1980's however, is the declining American access to both basing facilities and overflight rights.²⁰ This trend has been operative for a considerable time as former colonial powers continually lost access to traditional forward bases through the post-1945 period. The problem of basing has been compounded by political attitudes in the Third World that make providing such facilities to the United States a liability to the host country. It seems unlikely in the immediate future that these attitudes among Third World nations will reverse, and, therefore, American access to forward bases and overflight rights will continue be a substantial difficulty. Such a situation will substantially affect the ability of the United States to project power at the periphery, and will be a matter of particular concern if security problems pit the U.S. against well armed regional powers.

²⁰ Trager and Scully, in Sarkesian and Scully, Potentials for Military Struggles in the 1980's, p. 190; Discriminate Deterrence, p. 10.

A final and critical change to the strategic environment relates to increased American economic dependence on regions outside of Europe. While Europe remains an important economic and political focus for the United States, vastly increased trade with the nations of the greater Asian region and reliance on important mineral resources in the Third World both serve to expand America's security interests in these regions. With respect to international trade, the East Asia-Pacific region has surpassed Europe as a trading partner for the United States.²¹ With respect to mineral resources, the United States has experienced expanded security interests as well. The most obvious example is the oil resources of the Persian Gulf. The nations of the West rely extensively on oil from the Middle East, and a loss of access to these resources would auger disaster both economically and militarily for the West.²² The Carter Doctrine was the explicit recognition of this problem, and the Reagan administration was equally sensitive to this issue, as American and Allied activity in the Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war is powerful testimony. Expanded regional economic interests unavoidably presents the United States with increased security concerns. Economic interests cannot be separated from a nation's security, and as the importance of international trade to economic well-being grows, the need to be able to safeguard those interests grows also.

²¹ Annual Report to the Congress, Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 1989, p. 81.

²² U.S. Defense Policy, Congressional Quarterly Inc., pp. 127-128; Trager and Scully, in Sarkesian and Scully, Potentials for Military Conflicts in the 1980's, p. 190.

The substantial changes in the strategic environment have put the United States in the position of having to readdress its defence policy. This required assessment has been made even more important due to the fact that the 1970's was a period of decline in terms of resources allocated to defence. The general situation in which the United States has found itself was one of reduced capability, but in which the realities of the new strategic environment have imposed expanded security interests and responsibilities on the United States. One could argue that the Reagan administration found itself in a situation that is crudely analogous to the Kennedy administration two decades previously. The Eisenhower period was one of military restraint in terms of resources. Defence policy through the 1950's relied on the deterrent value of nuclear weapons in order to keep control of defence spending. When Kennedy took office there was considerable concern that undue emphasis on nuclear weapons at the expense of conventional capabilities had compromised the military flexibility of the United States.²³ Owing to the apparent stability in the European theatre, the likely area of communist challenge was thought to be at the periphery. In the case of the Reagan Administration, it too took office after a period of military malaise. Furthermore, beyond the urgency of revitalizing American defence capabilities in light of Soviet advances, the periphery once again rose to prominence as a significant security concern. For the Kennedy Administration, limited war strategy was adopted to provide a capacity to deal with peripheral challenges. Given the current salience of extra-European regions in American

²³ Aliano, Richard A., American Defence Policy From Eisenhower To Kennedy: The Politics of Changing Military Requirements, 1957-1961, Ohio University Press, Athens Ohio, 1975, See chapter II pp. 24-69.

security policy, it is logical to ask whether limited war thinking has been of any influence.

The simple answer to this question is that limited war concepts have not played a role in the revision of American military doctrine that has occurred in the post-Vietnam period, and the reasons are several. In the first place, the strategic environment that currently faces the United States is markedly different than that which faced the Kennedy Administration. The implication of this for the formation of defence strategy is substantial. The particulars of the strategic environment of the 1950's and 1960's naturally led to certain assumptions with respect to the necessary components of strategy. It is equally natural, therefore, that the changed strategic environment of the 1980's has influenced the development of defence policy and determined the nature of specific military strategy; limited war concepts have been muted in this process.

The concept of limited war adopted in the early 1960's in the wake of the last major revision of American military doctrine was in part a result of the structure of the strategic environment and the assumptions it generated. The central environmental assumptions which underlay the adoption of limited war strategy were: first, the idea that the strategic "centre" was made up of the nations of Europe and, of course, the territory of the United States; second, the Soviet Union directly threatened only the centre, and with respect to this challenge, American military preponderance - resting on the deterrent value of nuclear weapons - would deter aggressive intentions; finally, the periphery, made up of regions outside of Europe, would be the

locale of piecemeal aggression and not of direct challenges by the Soviet Union. Many of these assumptions about the strategic environment have been challenged by the developments of the 1970's and 1980's and, therefore, it seems reasonable that limited war strategy, a product of a different age, might not be seen to apply to the security dilemmas of the current international system.

The changed strategic environment which confronts American security planners has led to several notable developments in U.S. defence policy. It will be the purpose of the remainder of this chapter to describe and analyze these aspects of post-Vietnam defence policy with a specific focus on the concept of force application currently emphasized in American strategy. The first development of importance to be discussed will be the "regionalization" of American security interests. It will be argued here that Europe no longer remains in a class of its own as a strategic interest of the United States. The realities of the post-Vietnam strategic environment have led to a revision of America's traditional centre-periphery view in its containment policy. This revision has served to elevate what were formerly peripheral areas to the centre of American security values. Given the fact that the current strategic environment has presented new challenges to American security policy, there has been a corresponding change in American strategy as well. Since extended deterrence has remained a cornerstone of American strategic policy the United States has been forced to search for a different method of safeguarding its regional interests. It will be argued that nuclear weapons have been de-emphasized in extended deterrence and that current strategy seeks to raise

the nuclear threshold by emphasizing conventional deterrence. The result of the shift in the type of deterrence applied to America's extended commitments has been the convergence of what were formerly two distinct levels of deterrence strategy. Although different strategies are currently advocated for the various regions of concern to the United States, an analysis of the concept of force application in each of them will reveal that they are underwritten by a common focus on the strategic concept of war-fighting.²⁴ It will be suggested that the emphasis on war-fighting has had the effect of removing limited war concepts from declared strategy. While limited war concepts are not currently considered to be appropriate to the task of extending deterrence to America's regional interests, they will have considerable salience if conflict occurs between East and West. It remains to develop and analyze the preceding arguments in greater detail.

The first critical development in American security policy has been the regionalization of American security interests. Traditionally, Europe's status as a security value set it apart from all other regions. This was a natural by-product of the Second World War, given that the genesis of the East-West problem has been the division of Europe. The threat of Soviet expansion was logically thought to be greater in the European theatre more than in any other regions. As a result, American containment thinking was characterized by a separation of Europe from other geographical regions. Europe constituted

²⁴ Simply stated, war-fighting strategy is oriented toward invoking deterrence not by the threat of punishment but, rather, by the threat of denial. As such, forces will be structured and deployed in a fashion that would allow for the military defeat of an adversary in the event that deterrence broke down. war-fighting strategy, therefore, is very different than current NATO nuclear escalating policy and very different from limited war strategy as well.

the strategic centre and the remaining regions made up the periphery. This traditional centre-periphery view dominated American security policy until the late 1970's. American strategy for the greater part of the post-war period was formulated on the basis of a fundamental distinction between the European theatre and the remaining regions. This was true for the strategy of massive retaliation and for the strategy of limited war, in spite of the fact that limited war was a reaction to the shortcomings of massive retaliation. Both strategies separated the globe into centre and periphery.

The strategic environment of the post-Vietnam period presented challenges to the United States which led to the revision of traditional centre-periphery containment thinking. Global developments politically, economically, and militarily, have had the effect of elevating other regions to the centre of American security policy. In short, regionalization has reduced Europe to the status of an important, but by no means exclusive, region of concern to the United States.²⁵ The European theatre remains an area of concern for the United States simply because of the vast amount of Soviet military resources that are concentrated in the East European theatre. It would be impossible and foolhardy to ignore the European theatre while such a concentration of potentially hostile forces exists. What has changed in Europe, in spite of the size of military forces stationed there, is the perception of the actual threat of conflict in Europe. While conflict in Europe cannot be ruled out it is not the most likely contingency in terms of military planning.

²⁵ Buteux, Paul, "The Political and Strategic Implications of the INF Treaty for NATO", Occasional Paper, The Programme in Strategic Studies - University of Manitoba, p. 11.

One of the most notable aspects of the current strategic environment has been the enhanced capacity of the Soviet Union to project force on a global basis. In regions formerly thought to be peripheral, such as the Middle East, the United States faces the prospect of Soviet intervention. Given the endemic instability of these regions, the increased Soviet ability to project force globally has led to the feeling in the United States that there is a greater threat of conflict in these regions than in Europe.²⁶ The result of the feeling that regions other than Europe are under the greatest degree of threat has been the relative enhancement of these regions in relation to Europe in American containment policy.

Evidence which supports the argument that Europe has come to play a reduced role in American calculations can be found in the recent academic debates over the nature of the American presence in Europe. Although official statements currently do not suggest a shift in American military resource allocation to address expanding regional interests, it is difficult not to recognize the "skewed" nature of U.S. military resources devoted to Europe. Europe contains a grouping of well endowed economies when compared with other regions where American security interests exist, yet U.S. military resources are concentrated there. In light of the regionalization of American security interests, there has been an academic debate that has focused

²⁶ See: Annual Report to the Congress, Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 1987, p. 55.

It is interesting to note that in the section which assesses the nature of the Soviet threat the discussion focuses almost exclusively on the global aspect of the threat. The specific examples of Soviet expansionary pressures that are cited are in what were formerly peripheral regions. It is quite evident that the areas that are considered most at risk do not include Europe.

on rationalizing the allocation of increasingly overtaxed military forces.²⁷ At the extreme, there has been the suggestion that American ground troops be withdrawn from Europe. This option has been suggested as the logical extension of the Nixon Doctrine to Europe.²⁸ There have been also less radical proposals, such as European financial assistance in the maintenance of currently deployed American forces.²⁹ Although these proposals differ considerably in the degree of change they advocate for American presence in Europe they nonetheless underline the common belief that change is necessary. In official circles such bold statements are not as yet politically feasible, but given the recognition of several regional interests, it is likely that this silence will not last forever.

In spite of the current attention to regionalization, the identification of areas outside of Europe as critical to American security is traceable to the early pronouncements of George Kennan. In the late 1940's when American policy toward the Soviet Union was being formulated, Kennan suggested that the vital interests of the United States consisted of the major industrial centres of the globe.³⁰ The idea that regions other than Europe constituted key strategic interests for the United States was held also by most individuals responsible for

²⁷ For example see: Gray, The Maritime Strategy, p. 15; Hanks, Robert J., in Record Jeffrey, and Hanks, Robert J., U.S. Strategy At The Crossroads, p. 50.

²⁸ Record, Jeffrey, in Clark, Asa A., Chiarelli, Peter W., McKittrick, Jefferey S., Reed, James W., The U.S. Defense Reform Debate: Issues and Analysis, The Johns Hopkins University Press, London, 1984, p. 161.

²⁹ Huntington, Samuel P., "Coping With The Lippmann Gap", Foreign Affairs, vol. 66 #3, 1988, p. 460.

³⁰ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, See chapter 11.

security planning. The tendency to focus on Europe has its roots in the fact that East and West face each other in Europe with vast military resources. Military planning has consequently been more oriented toward conflict in the European theatre, and as a result military planners viewed Europe as the strategic centre and the remaining areas as the periphery. This centre-periphery view has affected the construction of military strategy. As later discussion will reveal, American strategy for extending deterrence traditionally operated in distinct levels with respect to Europe and the periphery. The important point to recognize is that from a political perspective, the identification of regional interests has always been a part of American containment thinking. What is significant about the recent process of regionalization is that it has brought the political perspective and the military strategy perspective together. The specifics of the adjustments in military strategy as they relate to regionalization will be discussed in detail subsequently.

The beginning of the regionalization process in its recent form can be traced back to the Carter Doctrine. President Carter raised the Gulf region to the status of a vital interest of the United States. This trend of recognizing regions outside of Europe as important to American security has continued after the Carter administration. The increased Soviet military threat is augmented by the fact that regions outside of Europe, especially Asia, have come to be seen as vitally important to the United States economically. In terms of trade, it has been recognized recently that the East Asia-Pacific region has surpassed Europe in importance.³¹ As well, Western dependence on Gulf

³¹ Annual Report to the Congress, Department of Defense, Fiscal Year

oil is a matter of vital concern for the United States. In total, American geostrategic interests away from Europe have risen dramatically in recent years. As a result the "strategic map" has been rearranged significantly and this has consequently posed a considerable challenge to American containment strategy. The basic tenets of American security policy have remained unchanged in spite of the considerable environmental shifts that have occurred. It is still considered critical that the United States possess the capability to protect all its vital regional interests, and, consequently, the maintenance of a credible extended deterrent strategy is paramount.

Throughout the post-war period American containment strategy has, to use Gaddis's terminology, alternated between symmetrical and asymmetrical responses. That is, the American effort to extend deterrence has on some occasions been dominated by nuclear weapons and at other times has stressed conventional means. For example, in the immediate post-war period, pre-war concepts of mobilization and the use of American industrial strength reflected a conviction that the next conflict would be fought in much the same fashion as the last. Conventional military force was perceived to be the answer to future security problems. The American experience with conventional war in Korea, along with growing Soviet nuclear capabilities, ushered in a period of reliance on nuclear weaponry for extended deterrence. This asymmetrical strategy gave way to limited war strategy that, given the shortcomings of nuclear weapons in providing deterrence at the periphery, stressed conventional means and the concept of responding to peripheral challenges symmetrically. In turn, the disaster of Vietnam dis-

credited the strategy of limited war. As the United States emerged from its self-imposed silence on matters of strategy to reconsider its security policy the type of containment strategy once again became a matter of debate. The question of how the United States was to successfully extend deterrence was not an open one. The changes in the strategic environment which dated back to the early 1970's inevitably affected the form that strategy would have to take. One of the most dramatic changes in the strategic environment has been the declining utility of nuclear weapons as credible instruments of extended deterrence.

It is, in a way, inaccurate to argue that American misgivings about the efficacy of nuclear weapons for extended deterrence is a new phenomenon. Attempts to readjust NATO strategy to a more conventionally oriented posture dates back to the Kennedy Administration, where Robert McNamara made a great effort to convince the Europeans to adopt a strategy that relied less on nuclear weaponry. McNamara failed in his attempt, and American efforts from the early 1960's to the present to effect an Alliance-wide enhancement of conventional forces have not succeeded. The reasons for this failure are well known and do not require lengthy restatement here. Suffice it to say that the political and strategic-military viewpoints of Americans and Europeans with respect to Western defence are characterized by fundamental differences. It has consistently been the case that the Europeans have stressed the need to couple American strategic forces to the defence of Europe. Americans naturally have been uncomfortable with the arrangement of offering their cities as hostages for the purpose of

detering an attack on Europe. While effective extended deterrence has always been a fundamental goal of American security policy, the role of nuclear weapons in extended deterrence has been an uncomfortable one for the United States.

The historical American anxiety over the use of nuclear weapons as instruments of extended deterrence has become more pronounced in recent years. The achievement of strategic parity by the Soviet Union in the early 1970's brought into reality what Bernard Brodie had speculated about in 1946. At some point the vast nuclear arsenals of the superpowers would cancel each other out. A caveat to this argument exists and needs to be stated. In a situation of strategic parity nuclear weapons still have utility, however, it is limited in nature. Nuclear weapons can still be used to invoke deterrence, but not in all instances. To threaten to retaliate with nuclear weapons if one is attacked directly is credible, but to make the same threat if an ally is assaulted is another matter. Strategic parity has called into question the American extended deterrent to Europe. It is questionable if the Soviet Union would take seriously the threat to unleash American strategic forces if Europe were attacked. This was a problem for the United States in the 1960's and the result was the adoption of the strategic concept of flexible response. By the middle of the 1970's Soviet theatre deployments eroded the value of the concept of flexible response in the opinion of many American analysts.³² The recent INF Treaty has completely removed theatre based intermediate systems and has, one could argue, condemned the strategic concept of

³² Freedman, Lawrence, "NATO Myths", Foreign Policy, #45, Winter 1981-1982, pp. 64.

the strategic concept of flexible response to the graveyard of outmoded nuclear strategies. If one accepts this interpretation of the implications of the INF Treaty, American extended deterrence has returned to the uncomfortable scenario of threatening to escalate from a conventional conflict, where battlefield nuclear weapons may or may not be used, to the use of strategic systems based in the United States. It has become impossible to ignore the role of nuclear weapons in devising a new strategy to deal with the realities of the current strategic environment.

Recent academic literature and official documents have reflected an unmistakable disinclination to view nuclear weapons as profitable instruments of extended deterrence. One of the most interesting arguments on the academic side has been made by Edward Luttwak. In a provocative article Luttwak has suggested that we might be witnessing the dawn of the post-nuclear era.³³ The argument is based on the proposition that, in spite of their enormous destructive capability, nuclear weapons are no different than any other military innovation. Eventually, each military innovation loses its utility through circumvention or countermeasure. For nuclear weapons the idea is not really all that radical; Henry Kissinger, as early as the first Nixon Administration, was fond of pointing out that since the Cuban missile crisis nuclear weapons had not had a significant effect on the outcome of any East-West crisis. He further suggested that in the future the role of nuclear weapons would likely diminish.³⁴ The idea that nuclear weapons

³³ Luttwak, Edward N., "An Emerging Postnuclear Era?", Washington Quarterly, vol. 11 #1, Winter 1988, pp. 5-15.

³⁴ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 277.

are becoming less and less relevant in devising a military strategy for extending deterrence to Europe and the other regional interests has become prominent in current literature.³⁵ Beyond discussion in the general literature, the report of the Commission On Integrated Long Term Strategy, entitled "Discriminate Deterrence", has also underlined the diminishing value of nuclear weapons with respect to an extended American deterrent;

To help defend our allies and to defend our interests abroad, we cannot rely on threats expected to provoke our own annihilation if carried out. In peacetime, a strategy based on such threats could undermine support for national defense. In a crisis, reliance on such threats could fail catastrophically for lack of public support. We must have militarily effective responses that can limit destruction of what we are defending.³⁶

This line of reasoning completely undermines extended deterrence as well as NATO's nuclear escalatory strategy. It is worth noting that the Commission's report has not received the blessing of Washington and perhaps the affront to Alliance policy plays no small part in official reservations. The time is not yet right to publicly call Alliance strategy into question in such stark degree. Notwithstanding the political infeasibility of suggesting that America's extended deterrent is no longer credible, official statements nonetheless do reveal some discomfort over Alliance strategy and its reliance on nuclear weapons.

³⁵ For example see: Brzezinski, Zbigniew, "America's New Geostrategy", Foreign Affairs, Spring 1988, pp. 688-699; Gray, The Maritime Strategy Mueller, John, "The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World", International Security, vol. 13 #2, Fall 1988.

³⁶ Discriminate Deterrence, p. 2.

In annual reports to Congress by the Secretary of Defense the theme of greater effort in conventional forces in order to lessen NATO's dependence on nuclear forces is evident.³⁷ With the objective of maintaining an effective extended deterrent still a major aspect of American defence policy, the concept of conventional deterrence has received some consideration in official circles;

Effective defense using conventional forces has several advantages over nuclear retaliation. First, it is more credible to potential aggressors contemplating nonnuclear aggression. Second, it is particularly attractive in blocking attempts at intimidation by a hostile nation. In Western Europe, for example, a stronger conventional defense posture would provide citizens and their governments increased confidence to resist Soviet threats and attempts at coercion.³⁸

Furthermore, it has been explicitly recognized that the enhancement of Soviet nuclear forces has made the early resort to nuclear weapons that current NATO strategy implies a threat of dubious credibility.³⁹

In spite of these official statements, which represent a diluted form of the more extreme arguments found in the academic literature, the United States has not yet officially called for a revision of NATO strategy. The report to Congress for fiscal year 1989 reveals this most strikingly in its discussion of the effects of the INF Treaty;

elimination of ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers under the INF Treaty, combined with the potential for deep reductions in strategic nuclear systems, underline the importance of our conventional forces' contribution to deterring Soviet aggression, especially in Europe. Conventional force improvements will help ensure that negotiated reductions in nuclear arsenals enhance the Alliance's overall deterrent

³⁷ See: Annual Report to the Congress, Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 1984, pp. 56-57; Fiscal Year 1986, p. 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Fiscal Year 1989, p. 55.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

posture and its ability to execute NATO's strategic concept of flexible response strategy.⁴⁰

It is difficult to imagine how the reductions in nuclear systems envisaged in the preceding passage will leave the strategic concept of flexible response intact. Nonetheless, the salient point is that it is evident that the time is not yet right for less guarded statements with respect to NATO strategy.

In spite of the fact that the United States has not yet made an explicit call for the revision of Alliance strategy, it is certain that the indirect approach of communicating shifting strategic imperatives that the United States currently employs will not last forever. The two key developments in American defence strategy, namely the regionalization of security interests and the de-emphasis on nuclear weapons, both demand and guarantee that a revision of defence thinking will take place. In fact it can be argued that a shift in American strategic thinking has already occurred, and that only the political imperatives of the Alliance have prevented the direct articulation by Washington of the need for a new system of security arrangements to deal with Western security. The regionalization of security interests, coupled with the desire not to use nuclear weapons in extending deterrence to vital security regions, has led to a convergence of two previously distinct levels of American strategy. Evidence of this convergence can be found in the new service doctrines that have emerged during the Reagan Administration (AirLand Battle and the Maritime Strategy). Although these service doctrines are different in many significant ways, they both stress a concept of force applica-

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 56.

tion which clearly testifies to the recent convergence of extended deterrence strategy. Both service doctrines are based on war-fighting concepts and reveal that the United States has shifted to thinking of extended deterrence in conventional terms. Before discussing the service doctrines in greater detail it is necessary to develop the concept of strategy convergence.

Traditionally American strategy has operated on three levels. First, deterrence of a direct attack on the United States; secondly, the deterrence of an attack on Western Europe; and finally, the prevention of Soviet expansion in other regions of importance to the United States. At one time nuclear weapons were central to all the levels of American strategy. As a result of the disillusion with a limited war in Korea, and a concern over the financial costs of defence in general, the strategy of massive retaliation was adopted in order to extend deterrence to all three levels of security interests. In essence, massive retaliation was an attempt to have one strategy cover three separate missions despite the substantial differences in each. This concept of deterrence eventually gave way to primary deterrence of a direct attack on the United States and extended deterrence to Europe by nuclear weapons, and peripheral deterrence through a limited war strategy. Through the 1960's, therefore, the extension of deterrence to Europe and the periphery required two distinct levels of strategy in American security policy. For Europe, strategy was constructed on a nuclear foundation in which American strategic forces were coupled to the defence of Europe; such was not the case for peripheral conflict where resort to nuclear weapons was not credible,

or in most cases, profitable. The object of both strategies was to deter the Soviet Union. The difference between the nuclear-centric strategy for Europe and the limited war strategy for the periphery was merely a matter of method, but this nonetheless created two levels of strategy. The first concern of American strategy - that of deterring a direct attack on the United States - throughout the post-war period has been achieved by nuclear weapons. The credibility of the threat of nuclear retaliation for an attack on the United States has not succumbed to the difficulties associated with extended deterrence and thus has not been the focus of much controversy. Through the decade of the 1960's the three level nature of American strategy was not subjected to any substantial challenges. The three level nature of American strategy came under pressure only with the achievement of strategic parity by the Soviet Union.

The convergence of American strategy has occurred between level II strategy (Europe) and level III strategy (periphery). This convergence has been the result of two factors: the regionalization of security interests and the de-emphasis on nuclear weapons as instruments for extending deterrence. Both developments in American security policy combine to necessitate a common approach to containment by extended deterrence. Regionalization has led to the convergence of strategy for Europe and the periphery, because the existence of several regions of vital interest will require fewer, rather than more, strategies of response to various regional threats. It is not realistic to suggest that the United States has the resources to support different strategies for each region it has defined as vital to its

security. The most important factor in the convergence of level II and level III strategy has been the de-emphasis of nuclear weapons in the extended American deterrent. What had previously separated strategy for Europe and strategy for the periphery was the role that nuclear weapons played in each level. Strategy for the defence of Europe was centred on nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear retaliation for a conventional attack on Western Europe. The development of limited war strategy was the result of the belief that a nuclear strategy was entirely inappropriate for the deterrence of threat to American interests at the periphery. Consequently, once the opinion that nuclear weapons had no utility in advancing American objectives at the periphery began to dominate American thinking about Europe, the separation between what were previously distinct levels of strategy disappeared. What American defence policy seeks to do with respect to all of its regional interests is raise the nuclear threshold and provide for extended deterrence by conventional means. In order to substantiate the claim that strategy convergence has occurred, some analysis of recent developments in service doctrines is necessary.

The genesis of doctrinal discussion has been for the most part the result of each service engaging in a process of rethinking its mission in the context of the realities of the current strategic environment. In the case of the Army, the apparent re-emphasis on conventional defence that has been the result of decreasing enthusiasm over the role of nuclear weapons in extending deterrence to Europe has led to tactical revisions for the purpose of providing a credible conventional defence for Europe. To this end, the Army rewrote FM 100-5, its

doctrinal document, and introduced a concept of operations called "AirLand Battle."⁴¹ The Navy has capitalized on the regionalization of American security interests and has offered a doctrine of its own entitled "The Maritime Strategy". The Maritime Strategy, unlike the Army's FM 100-5, is not the revision of a tactical approach to an already defined mission, but, instead, is a statement of naval strategy defined in the context of American global security problems that have changed over the last decade. This comprises the major difference between the respective service doctrines. AirLand Battle operates on the tactical level and is oriented purely toward the European theatre. The Maritime Strategy, on the other hand, is a doctrine for the strategic level of operations that has applications for the European theatre and other regional interests.

There can be no denying that each service doctrine is motivated to some extent by service interests; for the Army, AirLand Battle is designed to deal with conventional conflict in Europe, a role the Army does not wish to see wither away as a result of current misgivings about the American presence on the continent; for the Navy, the Maritime Strategy, if accepted, would serve to elevate the importance of the Navy in American defence policy and allow for a substantial ship acquisition programme. Despite the obviously divergent service reasons for advancing each programme, important similarities exist. The

⁴¹ The Air Force has retained its mission in the strategic triad and also retains a high profile in NATO under the terms of the Follow On Forces Attack strategy (FOFA). As a result, the Air Force has not engaged in doctrinal revisions as have the Army and the Navy. Furthermore, the concept of operations in AirLand Battle incorporates deep strike missions for the air element, and consequently the Air Force has lent its support to the Army's new tactical doctrine.

concept of force application that underwrites both AirLand Battle and the Maritime Strategy is that of war-fighting, which, as subsequent discussion will reveal, is a significantly different concept for applying force than that inherent in limited war strategy. Some conceptual clarification on the difference between the concept of force application in war-fighting strategy and limited war strategy is required at this point.

As argued in chapter III, The American concept of limited war can be described as the use of force in a quasi-diplomatic fashion. The purpose of limited war, as understood by the Americans, was to apply force in a fashion that convinced the enemy to comply with the objectives of the United States. Limited war strategy was designed to allow the United States to dictate the rules of the conflict and the terms for its termination. In this respect limited war reflected the traditional American style of applying force. By dominating the escalation ladder, the United States hoped to prevent counter-escalation by the adversary, and, therefore, ensure that the conflict was fought under conditions chosen by the United States. Limited war strategy, if successfully utilized, would lead to the termination of the conflict prior to the actual military defeat of the opponent; this would occur because the method of applying force was designed to display clearly to the opponent that the United States would prevail at any level of violence that the adversary chose. It is this concept of force application that gives limited war its quasi-diplomatic nature. The purpose of limited war is not to defeat the adversary militarily, but, in essence, to convince the enemy to negotiate a settlement based on the

message that victory is not possible. This message is supposed to be communicated to the adversary through the specific method of applying force.

The objective of dominating the vertical escalation ladder that is inherent in the strategy of limited war is central to its concept of force application. Controlled vertical escalation has two purposes: first, to increase pressure on the enemy, either in response to his actions, or simply to exert more pressure on the adversary; and, secondly, to demonstrate conscious restraint, which is intended to signal the limited nature of the objectives sought in the conflict. If force is successfully applied in this fashion, logically the opponent will seek to terminate the conflict before suffering full military defeat and unnecessary degrees of physical punishment. It follows from this that protracted warfare has no place in properly applied limited war strategy. The domination of the vertical escalation ladder, coupled with the application of force with the intention of signalling both restraint and limited objectives, will serve to contain the conflict to lower levels of violence, and to terminate it before the total military defeat of the adversary. War-fighting strategy, on the other hand, is a significantly different method of applying military force.

War-fighting strategies are not based on the idea of using force as a signalling instrument, either to communicate political intentions or to threaten the prospect of vertical escalation. The objective of war-fighting strategy is simple: it is to defeat the enemy on the battlefield. Whereas in limited war strategy it is not necessary to defeat the opponent, a war-fighting strategy is predicated on the very

requirement to defeat the enemy by any method and at any level of a conflict. It is important to recognize that while the concept of force application inherent in limited war strategy and war-fighting strategy is different, the long-range objectives can be exactly the same. In the case of American strategy this assertion is illustrated in the new service doctrines and their emphasis on war-fighting strategy. Both AirLand Battle and the Maritime Strategy seek to raise the nuclear threshold and provide for extended deterrence in a manner that is less dependent on nuclear forces.

AirLand Battle is the Army's alternative tactical doctrine for defending Europe with less reliance on the early resort to nuclear systems. Although AirLand Battle envisages the early use of battlefield nuclear weapons as an integral element in the conventional defence of Europe, the whole purpose of AirLand Battle is to allow the United States to prevail in divisional level conventional battles.⁴² AirLand Battle is not predicated on vertical escalation, but rather on horizontal escalation within the conventional level of conflict.⁴³ Rather than having conventional forces as the first component of a

⁴² See: Sinnreich, Richard Hart, in Dunn, Kiehl A., Staudenmaier, William O., Colonel, Military Strategy In Transition: Defense and Deterrence in the 1980's, Westview Press, Boulder Colorado, 1983, chapter III "Strategic Implications of Doctrinal Change: A Case Analysis", pp. 42-59.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 53-54.

There is room for substantial debate as to whether the early use of tactical nuclear weapons that AirLand Battle calls for will be seen by the Soviet Union as horizontal escalation. It is reasonable to argue that the use of battlefield nuclear weapons might initiate the opening phase of escalation beyond the conventional level. However, the architects of AirLand Battle appear to have taken the position that the use of tactical nuclear forces is consistent with horizontal escalation.

vertical escalation strategy, AirLand Battle applied in a theatre wide manner is designed to raise the nuclear threshold and produce victory at the conventional level.

Although the war-fighting thrust of AirLand Battle necessarily causes the discussion of conflict to focus on the operational conduct of battle, one must not lose sight of the fact that AirLand Battle is about maintaining an effective extended deterrent in Europe. Despite apprehension about the ability of current NATO strategy to extend credibility deterrence to the European theatre, given the over-reliance on nuclear weapons, the United States has never abandoned the strategic objective of ensuring that an extended deterrent exists.⁴⁴ The reason why war-fighting strategy has recently received considerable attention in the doctrinal plans of the services is that deterrence at the conventional level requires such an approach to strategy.

Deterrence theory outlines two methods of deterring an adversary; first, deterrence by the threat of denial, that is, by convincing the enemy that the objective he seeks cannot be attained; secondly, an adversary can be deterred by the threat of punishment, whereby the objective sought may be attained but only at an unbearable cost. Nuclear weapons with their potential for massive destruction are perfectly suited for deterrence by the threat of punishment. Conventional weapons, on the other hand, do not lend themselves to deterrence by the threat of punishment. To deter conventionally and not resort to vertical escalation, the adversary must be convinced that there is no

⁴⁴ Annual Report to the Congress, Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 1986, pp. 29-30; Fiscal Year 1988, pp. 42-43; Fiscal Year 1989, p. 45.

prospect of success. Under these circumstances deterrence is invoked by the capability to physically deny the enemy the objective that is sought in the conflict. Consequently, conventional deterrence hinges upon the opponent's calculation of the course of battle, and whether, given the correlation of forces, success is possible. Because such calculations are based on operational factors, conventional deterrence has to be related directly to military strategy and the way in which military force is used to achieve battlefield objectives.⁴⁵ The war-fighting content of AirLand Battle is designed to create a viable tactical doctrine for the defence of Europe, and, in doing so, have an effect on the calculation of the Soviet Union that it can successfully overrun allied forces. If the concept of operations contained in AirLand Battle provides for an adequate defence, the Soviet Union can be deterred without NATO resorting to the increasingly less credible threat of vertical escalation.

The Maritime Strategy differs from AirLand Battle in terms of its geographical focus and, in terms of the operational level on which it is constructed. With respect to the latter, the Maritime Strategy is not a tactical doctrine, but an alternative strategy for dealing with American global security interests. Despite the differences between AirLand Battle and the Maritime Strategy, the concept of force application is similar in both strategies. The concepts of war-fighting and horizontal escalation are evident in both.⁴⁶ The general argument

⁴⁵ Mearsheimer, John J., Conventional Deterrence, Cornell University Press, London, 1983, p. 28.

⁴⁶ Brooks, Linton, Captain (N), "Naval Power and National Strategy: The Maritime Strategy and Deterrence in Europe", International Security, vol. 11 #2, Fall 1986, p. 87.

behind the Maritime Strategy is that the United States is primarily a maritime power. In fact, it is not infrequently suggested that the current global position of the United States is analogous to that of Great Britain prior to World War II.⁴⁷ The "navalists" argue that American interests are global in nature, and that the protection of the sea lines of communication (SLOC) is essential to American security. The central argument of the Maritime Strategy regarding the global expanse of American interests fits well with the trend toward the regionalization of American security interests that began with the Carter Doctrine. Proponents of the Maritime Strategy suggest that American global interests can be protected by ensuring a command of the seas and by an ability to project power globally. As with AirLand Battle, the concept of operations is based on war-fighting and horizontal escalation.

The Maritime Strategy, which incorporates naval and amphibious forces, outlines four essential missions. The first of these is to deny the Soviet Union its preferred conflict on one front by exerting pressure on a global scale. Secondly, the successful application of force must include the destruction of the Soviet Navy. Thirdly, naval forces must influence the land battle in Europe by tying down Soviet forces in other theatres. Finally, the conflict must be terminated on terms that are acceptable to the United States and her allies.⁴⁸ It is felt necessary, by those who advocate the Maritime Strategy, that the

⁴⁷ For example see: Gray, The Maritime Strategy, pp. 16-17; Hanks, U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads, p. 43.

⁴⁸ Brooks, "Naval Power and National Strategy", p. 69; Kaufmann, William W., A Thoroughly Efficient Navy, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C., 1987, p. 14.

four critical maritime missions require the use of horizontal rather than vertical escalation.⁴⁹ The need to shift to a strategy of horizontal escalation in order that the Maritime Strategy succeed arises out of the same pressure to adopt horizontal escalation in AirLand Battle. If the United States has lost domination of the vertical escalation ladder, a strategy that relies on vertical escalation will not provide for an extended deterrent, or a satisfactory operational doctrine if conflict breaks out. Again, although important differences exist, the similarities of the service doctrines are revealed. Both AirLand Battle and the Maritime Strategy represent attempts to devise a credible extended deterrent that centres on raising the nuclear threshold and adequately coping with the realities of the current strategic environment.

Given the new developments in service doctrines in the 1980's, it is logical to ask whether limited war concepts have had any relevance in the redefinition process. The answer to this question is straightforward; limited war concepts have not been a part of the revision of American thinking about the important objective of maintaining an effective extended deterrent. The reasons for the lack of attention paid to limited war concepts are several. From the point of view of the military, from which the service doctrines emanate, the absence of limited war ideas in the new doctrinal postures is hardly surprising. The military was never an enthusiastic supporter of the concept of operations inherent in limited war strategy. From the perspective of the American political leadership the political liability of discuss-

⁴⁹ Dunn, Kieth A., Staudenmaier, William O., Colonel, "Strategy For Survival", Foreign Policy, #52, Fall 1983, p. 25.

ing anything that approximates to the idea of limited war also has to be taken into account when explaining the current lack of attention to limited war concepts. The Vietnam War was far too an embittering experience for the U.S. leaders to encourage the discussion of anything that resembled limited war. Finally, developments in the strategic environment that transcend institutional biases have also served to push limited war ideas from the agenda of strategic discussion.

Recent trends in arms control and the regionalization of American security interests have led to the de-emphasis of nuclear weapons in American extended deterrent strategy. The shifting utility of nuclear weapons is of enormous significance in terms of the type of strategy that is required to cope with extended deterrence. It is important to remember that limited war strategy was itself a product of a strategic environment in which nuclear weapons were central to at least one level of American extended deterrence policy. As the East-West strategic relationship moved toward a state where nuclear weapons possessed less utility, conventional forces played a larger role in extended deterrence. Deterrence by conventional means, as previous discussion has revealed, can be sustained effectively only by maintaining the capacity to deny the adversary his objective. The military defeat of the enemy, a concept foreign to limited war strategy, is the imperative of any war-fighting strategy, and hence is central to current service doctrines. Neither service doctrine could provide any deterrence benefits if they failed to provide an operational doctrine that had a good prospect of defeating Soviet forces in battle.

The fundamental reason that limited war concepts are not thought to be relevant with respect to current security dilemmas has to do with the role of declaratory strategy. Declaratory strategy's primary objective is to support deterrence by convincing potential adversaries that conflict cannot be in their interest. The role of declaratory strategy has been the same for all the successive doctrines that have manifested themselves since the dawn of the age of deterrence. It was true of massive retaliation as it was for limited war, and in the case of NATO, the strategic concept of the strategic concept of flexible response. Irrespective of the substantial changes that have occurred in the strategic environment, the necessity for declaratory strategy to support a deterrent posture remains. The new service doctrines are simply the successors of previous attempts to give substance to deterrence, and as a consequence, the service doctrines must satisfy the requisites of declared doctrine in the same way. Since the realities of the current strategic environment have led to an emphasis on conventional deterrence and the raising of the nuclear threshold, the concept of force application inherent in limited war strategy fails to meet the critical requirements of declaratory strategy. Conventional deterrence can be invoked only by the ability to deny the adversary his stated objectives. In a way, limited war was designed to do this. However, given the peculiarities of the strategic environment that molded limited war thinking, the negation of the adversary's aim in limited war strategy was to be achieved without his military defeat. Conventional deterrence through war-fighting strategy, on the other hand, is predicated on the military defeat of the enemy. The reason why limited war strategy has not been a factor in recent doc-

trinal revisions simply has to do with the fact that, given the demands of the current strategic environment, it cannot provide for a credible extended deterrent.

While it is true to assert that limited war concepts do not, and will not, play a role in current declaratory strategy it is not true to suggest that limited war concepts are entirely irrelevant to the use of force in the current strategic environment. It is worth recognizing that a key American assumption about the nature of the present threat to American interests brings U.S. defence policy back into line with one of the central assumptions of the limited war literature of the 1950's. It was then assumed by the limited war theorists that the principal enemy facing the United States was the Soviet Union. The specific strategy which they advocated was a product of this assumption. The application of limited war concepts in Vietnam, interestingly enough, witnessed the use of limited war concepts in a situation in which the "principal adversary" assumption was violated. The adversary with which the United States was locked in battle was not the Soviet Union. Current service doctrines have returned exclusively to the assumption that the Soviet Union is still the principal adversary. exclusively. The fact that the Soviet Union has returned to centre-stage in American calculations is significant in terms of the concept of limited war.

If conflict breaks out between East and West it would be an understatement to suggest that there would be considerable motivation to find limitations to the conflict. It is quite conceivable that during the course of a conflict the desire to avoid total destruction, and

therefore to invoke some form of limitation, would make relevant many limited war concepts. In such a situation the use of force to signal the desire for limitation, and as a method of demonstrating restraint, could readily serve political goals. Given the requisites of the current strategic environment, the utility of limited war concepts lies in their operational value. Whereas limited war strategy previously had utility in extending deterrence, now it can be useful only as an operational doctrine after war has begun. Furthermore, the model of limited war which offers the best hope of achieving and maintaining limits in future conflict is the interactive one.

It is very difficult to speculate in depth beyond the argument that concepts of limited war may be relevant in a conflict between East and West. There has been speculation that perhaps the Western security arrangements of the post-war period are in their twilight. It is not inconceivable that the United States will revise its role in Europe, and this would have the effect of significantly altering American defence priorities. Even if the United States redefines its role in Europe in the future however, it is not likely that its global interests would then cease to exist. Unless nuclear weapons or some other weapon of mass destruction return to dominate America's extended deterrence strategy, limited war concepts are unlikely to comprise a significant aspect of declaratory strategy.

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