



FROM THE ARCHIVE

This issue's "From the Archive" section includes a summary of Colin Gray's 2003 article on "Maintaining Effective Deterrence" published by the U.S. Army War College. The article includes practical recommendations for the maintenance of effective deterrence, including developing a more empirically grounded theory of deterrence and maintaining a flexible military posture. The second article features Keith B. Payne's and Lawrence R. Fink's publication "Deterrence Without Defense: Gambling on Perfection," originally published in the Winter 1989 issue of *Strategic Review*. The authors point out that rationality is not a concept universally shared across different states, which makes U.S. strategic policy based on such an assumption fundamentally unreliable. Therefore, damage limitation measures are an essential part of U.S. efforts to deter.

Document No. 1. Colin S. Gray, *Maintaining Effective Deterrence*, "Summary," US Army War College, USAWC Press, August 1, 2003.*

SUMMARY

Deterrence has fallen on hard times. From being the proudest achievement of the U.S. defense community in the Cold War, both intellectually and as policy, strategy, and doctrine, deterrence today looks very much like yesterday's solution to yesterday's dominant problem. Times have changed, and each strategic context promotes the popularity of ideas that seem best suited to help cope with the challenges of the period. This monograph begins by recognizing that, although the Bush administration did not formally retire deterrence as concept or policy, it left observers in no doubt that in the global war it declared against terrorism, deterrence generally would be left on the bench. Whereas deterrence appeared to be resoundingly successful through 40-plus years of Cold War, its utility in the very different conditions of the 21st century is highly problematic at best.

The purpose of this monograph is to explore the state of deterrence now, and to see what can and should be saved from the wreckage of what once was the keystone in the arch of American strategic thought, policy, and strategy. To do this, the text begins by explaining how and why deterrence has fallen out of fashion. Next, it proceeds to detail the main elements in what fairly can be termed the current crisis of deterrence. Finally, the monograph outlines some practical measures, both quite general as well as specific to U.S. landpower, which should maximize the prospects for deterrence being all that it can be, admittedly in some truly demanding circumstances.

It is important to recognize that the monograph is informed by two strong beliefs which probably warrant labelling as assumptions. First, it rests on the conviction that deterrence, though diminished in significance, remains absolutely essential as an element in U.S. grand

* Full article is available at <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1786&context=monographs>.



strategy. Second, the monograph reflects the belief that landpower must make a vital contribution to such success for deterrence as may be achievable.

By way of terse explanation: some of the criticisms of deterrence, including those that are valid and indeed are replayed in this monograph, are apt to be silent on the problems with deterrence's policy and strategy rivals. It is true that deterrence is inherently unreliable. Unfortunately, as Clausewitz reminds us, "war is the realm of chance." One reason why deterrence has to be rescued from its current condition of semiretirement, is not so much because it offers great prospects of success, but rather because the leading alternatives suffer from severe limitations of their own. Military prevention/preemption is a necessary option as an occasional stratagem. However, it cannot possibly serve generally as the strategy of choice. In addition to military uncertainties, the domestic and international political demands on a preemptive strategy are much too onerous. If preemption can be only a minor, if still vital, player, the principal alternative would be a strategy of accommodation or appeasement. Positive inducements have their place in grand strategy, but there is nothing especially magical about their historical record of success (as our recent experience with North Korea illustrates all too clearly). Preemption and accommodation have roles to play, but if the burdens placed upon them are to be kept within sensible bounds, deterrence needs to handle much of the traffic.

Deterrence in Crisis.

The monograph provides a detailed review of the current crisis of deterrence. Key concepts are defined and explained. Those concepts are deterrence itself, compellence, dissuasion, inducement, preemption and prevention. Familiarity can breed contempt for the precise meaning of words. A surprisingly large number of people do not have a robust grip either upon how deterrence works (i.e., through a leadership deciding that it is deterred), or upon the distinction between preventive and preemptive action.

The monograph presents five broad points which capture much of the basis for the contemporary inclination to marginalize deterrence. First, many people have come to understand that deterrence is inherently unreliable. Those who demand certainty tend to be uneasy with a strategy that leaves a crucial power of decision with the adversary. Second, in retrospect the American theory of (nuclear) deterrence which underpinned, and sometimes guided, our strategic behavior in the Cold War, looks to have been nowhere near as magisterial as was believed at the time. Our theory, and attempted practice, of deterrence, assumed an effectively culture-free rationality. The American theory of deterrence was, and remains, exactly that, American. This fact can promote miscalculation on our part, given that American efforts to deter can succeed only if non-Americans choose to cooperate.

Third, the American theory and attempted practice of deterrence is prone to commit the cardinal error of confusing rationality with reasonableness. A recurring theme in U.S. public discourse is that of the rationality or irrationality of a particular foreign leadership. While genuinely irrational leaders do exist from time to time, meaning people who cannot

connect means purposefully with ends, their occurrence is so rare and their longevity in power is so brief, that they can be ignored. The problem is not the irrational adversary, instead it is the perfectly rational foe who seeks purposefully, and rationally, to achieve goals that appear wholly unreasonable to us. American strategic thinkers have long favored the fallacy that Rational Strategic Persons must think alike. More specifically, rational enemies are deterrable enemies. Fourth, deterrence has been marginalized because some of the more implacable of our contemporary adversaries appear to be undeterrable. Not only are their motivations apparently unreachable by the standard kind of menaces, but they lack fixed physical assets for us to threaten.

Fifth, the modern theory of deterrence was devised by people who were not, by and large, historians or close students of Clausewitz. The attempted practice of deterrence is subject to harassment, or worse, affected by events and influences that are best captured by Clausewitz's compound concept of "friction." Whether or not the American approach to deterrence is well-conceived, a great deal can go wrong on both sides of the relationship. Friction can occur at every level of conflict—policy, strategy, operations, tactics. Theoretical texts, as well as official statements of intent, on deterrence, understandably are all but silent on the subject of friction. This concept is notoriously difficult, if not actually impossible to operationalize. Even its author conceded that friction is a "force that theory can never quite define." In the real world of deterrence as policy and strategy, many things can, and frequently do, go wrong. One might conclude that military prevention or, if we are desperate, preemption, is the prudent path to take, since so much may hinder the prospects for success with deterrence.

In summary, the monograph points out the inherent unreliability of deterrence, the fragility of the theory with which we waged the Cold War, the continuing confusion of rationality with reasonableness, the likelihood that many of our new enemies will not be deterrable, and the working of friction to frustrate our best intentions.

Practical Measures.

So much for the bad news. The concluding section of the monograph advances the much better news that all is not lost on the deterrence front. Divided into "general measures" and "military measures," the study identifies and discusses "practical measures" whose adoption should help rescue deterrence from the discard file, or even from marginalization. As a general measure, the monograph advises that we should not "talk down deterrence." This recent official phenomenon has at least two unfortunate consequences: it provides fuel for those critics who wish to portray America as triggerhappy, and it overpersuades its exponents. Next, the monograph recommends that America look diligently for deterrable elements among, or vitally supportive of, our foes. I am not greatly impressed by the claim that our new enemies are undeterrable. Al Qaeda has many would-be martyrs in its ranks, but the organization is most careful of the lives of its key officers, and it functions strategically. It can be deterred by the fact and expectation of strategic failure.

The monograph advises respect for the working of general deterrence, or dissuasion, as contrasted with immediate (crisis-time) deterrence. Much of our success with deterrence leaves no footprints in the sand. America's military and economic reach and its reputation for firm behavior shape the international security environment. Putative foes are deterred without necessarily even being aware of the fact. They take account of America's guardianship behavior and restrict their ambitions accordingly. The study proceeds to advocate strongly the development of a more empirical theory of deterrence. America's theory of deterrence for the conduct of the Cold War was largely deductive in character and rested upon the convenient assumption that "one size of theory fits all." This was not true for the Soviet Union, and most assuredly it is not the case for the new adversaries of today and tomorrow. There is no adequate substitute for understanding the minds and the values they seek to maximize, that are targets for influence.

Much as war cannot be waged intelligently except in the light of the peace that it is supposed to herald, so deterrence cannot be attempted save in the context of a broad strategy of influence. War is not an end in itself, and neither is deterrence. The purpose of deterrence is to influence the decisions of others. Military threats comprise only one element in a strategy of influence. Deterrence should be most successful when it is supported by the adversary's knowledge, on the one hand that the United States is willing and able to take preemptive/preventive action, and on the other that promises of rewards for cooperative behavior are to be trusted. The monograph recommends that, contrary to much past American malpractice, the ideas of foreign adversaries should be taken seriously. After all, deterrence is all about influencing foreign minds. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of understanding the beliefs that dominate those minds, and which both shape the way the world is viewed, and serve as spurs to behavior.

It is necessary to demonstrate that terrorism fails. Brave people will sacrifice their lives for a cause, but what if nothing seems to change in the world? Al Qaeda has some distinctly terrestrial goals, and those can be denied by competent policies and strategies. Many of its officers and recruits should be discouraged by a growing realization that the Jihad they are waging is an exercise in futility. Finally, the monograph reminds its readers of the unfortunate fact that, by its high-profile opposition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the United States may be encouraging the perception that it can be deterred fairly easily. The law of unintended consequences has a way of ambushing what otherwise is sound policy. The more vehement the American opposition to proliferation, the greater the political and strategic value of such proliferation in the calculations of adversaries desperate for some way to secure asymmetric advantage. In its sensible quest to slow the pace of proliferation, America needs to be careful lest inadvertently it sends the message that even the most modest of WMD, especially nuclear capabilities, will reap wholly disproportionate rewards.

Under "military measures" to enhance deterrence, the monograph offers, and explains, four broad principles. It claims that force posture must be flexible and adaptable; that landpower is essential; that no particular military posture is uniquely deterring; and that U.S. landpower must be capable of contributing to strategic success in different kinds of

conflicts. The monograph concludes by itemizing the desirable or essential characteristics of U.S. landpower for it to perform satisfactorily in a deterrent role. If there is a guiding principle for this concluding section of the report, it is this judgment of Rear Admiral J. C. Wylie, USN: "The ultimate determinant in war is the man on the scene with a gun. The man is the final power in war. He is control. He determines who wins." Wylie's perceptive judgment speaks volumes to the matter of what enhances deterrence. His principle was never more in need of emphasis than it is today. Mission accomplishment can be threatened by risk-averse behavior for fear of casualties. Transformation, in practice, is more about exploiting technology than approaching war "in the round," let alone waging war with a view to winning the subsequent peace.

The following are the practical measures recommended in the report, both general and military.

Practical Measures for the Maintenance of Effective Deterrence.

General Measures.

- Don't talk down deterrence,
- Look for deterrable foes,
- Don't discount general deterrence, or dissuasion,
- Develop a more empirical theory of deterrence, Deterrence should be employed as part of a broad strategy of influence,
- Deterrence should be employed as part of a broad strategy of influence,
- Take the ideas of others seriously,
- Show that terrorism fails,
- Don't encourage the perception that the United States would be easily deterred by WMD.

Military Measures.

- Force posture must be flexible and adaptable,
- Landpower is essential,
- No particular military posture is uniquely deterring,

U.S. landpower must be capable of contributing to strategic success in different kinds of conflicts:

- Raids and brief interventions,
- Taking down rogue states,
- Holding off/defeating major regional powers,
- Irregular warfare,
- Peacekeeping/peacemaking,
- General dissuasion.

And U.S. landpower needs to be:

- Declassified,
- More Joint,
- More network-centric,
- Capable of heavy ground combat,
- Better able to use Special Forces,
- More focused on mission accomplishment than force protection,
- More skilled at civilian interface,
- More patient,
- More able to work with allies.

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Document No. 2. Keith B. Payne and Lawrence R. Fink, "Deterrence Without Defense: Gambling on Perfection," *Strategic Review* (Washington, DC: United States Strategic Institute, Winter 1989), pp. 25-40.

Keith B. Payne and Lawrence R. Fink

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Lawrence Fink, a specialist in Soviet foreign and defense policy at the National Institute for Public Policy, is currently engaged in studies of Soviet arms control policy, BMD activity, resource allocation and Soviet responses to U.S. strategic weapons program. His work has appeared in such publications as *Defense Media Review* and *Jane's Defence Weekly*.

In Brief

Classic theories of strategic deterrence in the nuclear age have focused on two basic requirements for an effective deterrent: the capability to inflict unacceptable damage and the manifest credibility of that threat. Those requirements, in turn, have been tested by a variety of quantitative "stability analyses" and efforts at decision-modeling that implicitly represent the political leader as rational "strategic man." Yet, the laboratory of history starkly demonstrates that the collision of nations does not lend itself to the informed, rational and coherent decisionmaking requisite to a durable efficacy of deterrence. Five case studies of historic conflict, including the recent Falklands War, illuminate the pervasive risk of deterrence failure—from acts of miscalculation, ignorance and/or irrationality, exacerbated by the impact on decisionmaking of domestic-political elements that are beyond the influence

of the other contending actors on the international stage. They empathize the imperative of an “insurance policy” of damage-limitation and direct defense.

On August 2, 1876, James Butler Hickok, better known as “Wild Bill” Hickok, was playing poker in Saloon Number Ten in Deadwood, Dakota Territory. Hickok, the “Prince of Pistoleers,” was a noted frontiersman and lawman—he was estimated to have killed up to 75 men in his efforts to enforce the law on the Frontier. Unfortunately, on this day, as Hickok sat playing poker, his back was toward an open door. While Wild Bill played, he was surprised by “Crooked Nose” Jack McCall who, influenced by strong drink, fired a fatal .45 bullet into the back of Hickok's head. Wild Bill had forgotten to protect himself by sitting with his back to the wall; an important precaution on the Frontier. Because Hickok held black aces and eights when he was murdered, that hand has become known in poker parlance as the “dead man's hand.”

Perhaps Wild Bill thought that his deserved reputation with a six-shooter would be sufficient to deter challenges that day; perhaps he was so distracted by the game that he neglected to take even elementary defensive precautions. Whatever the cause of Hickok's negligence, “Crooked Nose” Jack was undeterred by Hickok's reputation with a pistol. Jack was first acquitted but later hanged for Hickok's murder; that punishment, of course, could provide little consolation to Wild Bill.¹

The U.S. policy of strategic deterrence, based as it is entirely on offensive threats, is a powerful comfort to those who assume that the future will unfold in an orderly and predictable fashion. The question of deterrence failure—from an act of miscalculation, ignorance, stupidity, lack of caution and/or simple irrationality—has largely been avoided. If deterrence fails, the U.S. offense-only deterrent would leave us holding the “dead man's hand.” Of course, a devastating strategic retaliatory capability is available in the event strategic deterrence does fail. But as was the case for Wild Bill, inflicting a punitive sanction following Soviet attack would provide little comfort to the United States, which by then could have sustained as many as 165 million casualties.²

Psychological Mainsprings of Miscalculation

U.S. survival may depend on the reliability of deterrence in the event of acute crisis. This situation would be reasonable, even comforting—if deterrence were a reliable means of peacekeeping. Unfortunately, history demonstrates that the collision of states does not lend itself to the informed, rational and coherent decisionmaking and implementation required by the U.S. policy of strategic deterrence. The implications of that fact for U.S. policy are enormous and generally ignored.

¹ Muriel Wolle, *The Bonanza Trail* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1955), p. 465.

² See the discussion of casualty figures from a largescale Soviet attack in U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *The Effects of Nuclear War* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), pp. 94-95.

This defect in deterrence is based on more than the oft-noted possibility that leaders may behave irrationally and thereby be unaffected by the restraints of strategic deterrence. Rational leaders can also miscalculate as a result of a number of political and/or psychological factors, and thereby become involved in crisis, brinkmanship or war that an “objective” assessment would have led them to avoid.

One example of the type of psychological factors that appear to have led rational leaders to such miscalculation is the dental mechanism. Denial is a basic human psychological reaction to danger and involves “various degrees of nonperception, nonrecognition, nonunderstanding, or nonacceptance of certain realities in order to cope with otherwise unacceptable intrapsychic conflicts, feelings, or memories.”³ Detailed historical case studies demonstrate that this psychological defense mechanism has indeed been significant in miscalculations that resulted in the outbreak of crises and wars during both the nuclear and prenuclear age.⁴

Another common psychological process important in this regard has been labeled *bolstering*.⁵ This is the psychological tendency of decisionmakers who are compelled to choose from several unsatisfying courses to select the least miserable, minimize its possible negative consequences and exaggerate its positive attributes. The possibility for unwarranted overconfidence on the part of desperate leaders as a result of this psychological mechanism is obvious. As Richard Lebow observes, it blinds policymakers to the possible adverse consequences of their actions.⁶

As a result of psychological factors such as denial and bolstering, leaders in difficult situations often cannot engage in an “objective” assessment of information and expected consequences.⁷ Yet, for deterrence to function as envisaged in U.S. strategic policy, an objective assimilation of information and rational linking of actions to consequences is required. The lack of realism in deterrence theory in this regard led the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry to conclude that the long-range prospects for deterrence are not good because “it rests on certain dubious psychological assumptions.”⁸ History bears out the problem: rational leaders (i.e., normally able to assess information, calculate costs and benefits, and link actions with consequences) have been led by psychological factors to

³ Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, Committee on Social Issues, *Psychiatric Aspects of the Prevention of Nuclear War*, Report No. 57 (September 1964), p. 241. For basic discussions of psychological defense mechanisms such as repression and denial, see Willaim N. Dember and James J. Jenkins, *General Psychology: Modeling Behavior and Experience* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 659-678; and Lee Roy Beach, *Psychology: Core Concepts and Special Topics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), pp. 187-198.

⁴ Peter Karsten, Peter D. Howell and Artis Frances Allen, *Military Threats: A Systematic Historical Analysis of the Determinants of Success* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 21; Richard Ned Lebow, “Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War,” in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, Janice Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 103, 119; and, in the same text, Richard Ned Lebow, “The Deterrence Deadlock: Is There A Way Out?” pp. 182-183.

⁵ See the discussion in, Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 110.

⁶ Lebow, “Miscalculation in the South Atlantic,” op. cit., p. 104.

⁷ Karsten, et al., op. cit., p. 8.

⁸ *Psychiatric Aspects of the Prevention of Nuclear War*, op. cit., p. 268.

miscalculate in situations that otherwise appear to have been susceptible to objective assessment, the result having been brinkmanship, crisis and war.

Pitfalls of Stability Analysis

Political factors can also interfere in the rational calculations and policy implementation assumed in deterrence theory. For example, critical domestic political problems can significantly affect leaders' decisionmaking regarding foreign policy: with the calculation of external realities such as the "strategic balance" becoming only one of multiple determinants of behavior. In addition, the flow of accurate information to leaders and the implementation of even well-calculated policy decisions coming from leaders can be more or less impeded by the unique political structure and players involved in each case. Each of these factors, in addition to differences in cultural values and norms can,⁹ and historically has, undermined the type of informed and methodical decisionmaking and implementation assumed in deterrence theory.

In most analyses of deterrence "stability" those factors that render deterrence unreliable are simply not taken into serious consideration.¹⁰ U.S. and Soviet forces are compared, strategic exchanges are modeled, and net war outcomes projected. If, based on the result of force exchange analysis, it appears that net costs (in terms of targets destroyed) would be unacceptable to the attacker, deterrence is assumed to be stable. If an acceptable level of damage is anticipated, or even a *net* gain in a crisis, then an incentive to strike is presumed and the condition is considered "unstable."

Such force-exchange analyses are employed to draw conclusions about the "stabilizing" or "destabilizing" effect of prospective changes in the U.S. strategic force posture. That is, conclusions are offered concerning how a change in strategic forces will effect the probability of war. The assumption in such analysis, often left unstated, is that the political leader will behave as the strategic equivalent of Adam Smith's "economic man." Leaders are assumed to be ready, willing and able to engage in rational cost-benefit calculations, and to make their decisions accordingly. They are assumed to be supremely well-informed, able to absorb information and implement cost-minimizing decisions under great stress, and cognizant of opponents' political interests, values, intentions and military capabilities. This assumption of the political leader as informed "strategic man" is a convenience; it allows conclusions about the probability of war to be drawn based almost exclusively on that which is relatively easy to do: "number crunching" of strategic force exchanges.

Stability analyses tend to reach reassuring conclusions about deterrence without taking into account the troubling factors that often dominate crisis, brinkmanship and war—

⁹ Karsten, et al., op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁰ Among the numerous examples, see Glenn A. Kent, Randall J. DeValck and David E. Thaler, *A Calculus of First-Strike Stability (A Criterion for Evaluating Strategic Forces)*, N-2526-AF (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., June 1988); Paul L. Chazanowski, "Transition to Deterrence Based on Strategic Defense," *Energy and Technology Review*, January-February 1987, pp. 31-45; and Dean Wilkening and Kenneth Watman, *Strategic Defenses and First-Strike Stability*, R-3412-FF/RC (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., November 1986).

political and psychological factors significant to the involved leaders and political systems. In effect, typical stability analyses make judgments about a decision-making process that is dominated by politics and psychology without taking politics or psychology into explicit account. Yet, it is these most human of factors, as is discussed below, that render deterrence unreliable.

War is quintessential politics; deterrence is a psychological function. And decisionmaking in both cases is subject to the idiosyncrasies of human behavior. Attempting to draw conclusions about stability via force-exchange calculations alone is akin to searching for lost keys under a street lamp because that is where the light happens to be readily available.

There is nothing wrong if, as an intellectual exercise, one posits “Countries A and B,” assumes that “strategic man” is at the helm of each, calculates force exchanges, and then draws conclusions about the stability of deterrence for countries A and B. The problem is that the practitioners of such stability analysis tend to forget that they have created a fictitious world and claim that their conclusions are valid for the real world of international relations. It should not be considered quibbling to note that there is no country “A” or “B” on the U.N. roster, and probably very few examples of “strategic man” at the helm of any real state. A large grain of salt should be taken with any stability analysis that so ignores the political-military context, and the politics and psychology of the specific characters and states involved, yet offers realworld policy prescriptions concerning specific force structures and the probability of war.

Serious students of deterrence have for years recognized the shortcomings of deterrence theory and warned against that which has become the common *modus operandi* for practitioners of stability analysis; i.e., the use of simplistic, idealized notions of deterrence theory to produce specific policy recommendations. As Alexander George and Richard Smoke warned:

The unitary actor, rationality, and the other assumptions and simplifications we have discussed are necessary ones to make manageable the logical tracing out of abstract [deterrence] theory. So long as it is kept clearly in mind that deterrence theory does have an abstract-deductive character, they are harmless enough.

The hazard begins to enter in when this simplified model is used in a normative prescriptive mode. . . . Here we wish to emphasize the many respects in which current deterrence theory fails to satisfy the prerequisites of normative-prescriptive theory. Methodologically, deterrence theory simply has not been adequately tested against historical experience.... Substantively, deterrence theory is seriously incomplete, to say the least, for a normative-prescriptive application.¹¹

Despite this fair warning, quantitative analyses of “stability” based on simplified deterrence theory continue to be churned out, and include quite specific policy

¹¹ Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 82-83.

prescriptions about strategic forces and arms control. These analyses may be worse than misleading: they produce policy prescriptions based on analysis of a fictitious and idealized construct. Simplistic deterrence analyses have found at least one important audience: much of the expressed Congressional support for the Small ICBM, and opposition to the MX and SDI is based on such abstract stability analyses.

Questions of Deterrence Reliability

Since the mid-1970s a small number of academics in the fields of history, psychology and politics have moved deterrence analysis beyond simplistic deductive logic and force-exchange number crunching. These scholars have gone to the laboratory of history and discovered that leaders and governments often simply do not behave in the fully-informed and calculating manner assumed in simplified deterrence history.¹²

This conclusion, although tremendously important, has not yet found its way into the strategic policy debate in any serious way. There appears to be a built-in resistance to any fundamental questioning of U.S. deterrence policy. When all eggs are in a single basket, it is almost unthinkable to note that the basket has holes. Nevertheless, careful analysis of numerous historical case studies clearly demonstrates that deterrence, in a fundamental sense, is unreliable as a means of peacekeeping. It certainly is not as reliable as would need to be the case for U.S. strategic policy to be reassuring.

Classic discussions of strategic deterrence identify two basic requirements for an effective deterrent: the capability to inflict unacceptable damage and the manifest credibility of that threat. Yet, these well-known requirements are not sufficient for deterrence to “work.” There exists an entire set of often-ignored but necessary political and psychological conditions that must dominate the decisionmaking process on both (or all) sides if strategic deterrence is to function as envisaged. These include the following: leaders capable of relatively unbiased assessments of information and realistic linkage of actions to consequences; political systems permitting the implementation of rational decisions as policy; leaders who are well-informed and comprehend the intentions, interests, commitments and values of the opponent(s); leaders who focus on external factors (i.e., competing military capabilities) as the final determinant of decisions; and leaders who understand the military capabilities and consequences involved in their decisions, at least at a general level.

If one or several of these conditions is absent, there is no basis for assuming that the necessary cost-benefit calculations could be conducted, would determine policy and/or could have a useful deterrent effect. The existence and degree of these psychological-political conditions is difficult to identify and measure in any specific case—hence the

¹² This point was recognized as early as 1964 by the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. See *Psychiatric Aspects of the Prevention of Nuclear War*, op. cit., especially pp. 267-275.

overwhelming tendency to ignore them and base grand conclusions about deterrence on a piece of the puzzle that is quantifiable, i.e. force exchange computations.

If, by assuming away other important factors, deterrence is calculated only in terms of maintaining a nuclear “stick,” then it is not difficult to conclude that stability is relatively “easy” to achieve. At this simplistic level the maintenance of survivable nuclear forces is interpreted as an assurance of nuclear peace.

If the necessary political-psychological conditions identified above are taken into consideration, however, such sanguine conclusions about stability seem inappropriate. Indeed, strategic deterrence can be judged unreliable as a means of peacekeeping—almost regardless of the “strategic balance”—because the convenient assumption about the political decisionmaker as “strategic man” is not always consistent with historical experience.

The brief case studies that will be presented below are intended to present evidence from history to demonstrate that the assumption of “strategic man” is open to serious question. The case studies include crises from both the nuclear and prenuclear age: the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the Japanese attack on the U.S. in 1941 and the Falklands War of 1982.

A Nuclear Dividing Line?

Before delving into those case studies, a myth needs to be confronted. Historical analysis of the prenuclear era may be considered to be of questionable relevance to considerations of modern deterrence: “nuclear weapons changed everything” is the common refrain. Yet, detailed historical studies, including numerous cases across centuries, conclude that the introduction of nuclear weapons has not radically altered the factors important to the success or failure of international threats.¹³ In addition, the psychological and political factors that make deterrence unreliable appear relatively unaffected by technological change. The advent of nuclear weapons has not altered the capacity of humans to make errors of judgment, to miscalculate, to behave irrationally, to be uninformed, to deny information inconsistent with desires, or to run great risks for great stakes. Albert Einstein observed that nuclear weapons have changed everything but our thinking.¹⁴ That, of course, is the point: if nuclear weapons have not changed humankind's thinking (and, one might add, emotions and psychological weakness), then a highly significant factor with regard to brinkmanship, crisis and war is unchanged.

¹³ Karsten, et al., op. cit., pp. 79-85. For an interesting discussion, see also John Mueller, “The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World,” *International Security*, Fall 1988, pp. 55-79.

¹⁴ Albert Einstein's statement was, “The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our ways of thinking. Thus we are drifting toward a catastrophe beyond comparison. We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking, if mankind is to survive.” The problem is, of course, that a “new manner of thinking” may not be within the human capacity to achieve.

Additionally, nuclear weapons may *not* have established the entirely unique condition that typically is thought to preserve nuclear peace—i.e., the possibility of the rapid destruction of society. Leaders and publics from the prenuclear era have either *perceived* that they faced possible “civilization-ending” military threats, or actually have faced such threats for their particular civilizations. These expectations did not prohibit conflict. Former British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan suggests this point in the following comment from his memoirs:

Among other deterrents of war in 1938, expert advice had indicated that bombing of London and the great cities would lead to casualties on the order of hundreds of thousands or even millions within a few weeks. *We thought of air warfare in 1938 rather as people think of nuclear warfare today.*¹⁵ [Emphasis added]

Frederick M. Sallagar, in *The Road to Total War* confirms MacMillan's nuclear analogy and adds the key point: “That these images, public and official alike, were based on a gross exaggeration of what airpower could do at the time is beside the point. They were what people expected to happen.”¹⁶ Sallagar notes that this mistaken view of airpower was at least partially responsible for Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.¹⁷

Politically elite circles prior to World War II thought of airpower as promising such utter mutual devastation that it would deter war. Indeed, the hope for mutual deterrence through threats of mutual destruction is not new to the nuclear age. J. M. Spaight demonstrates in the 1938 book *Air Power in the Next War* (from “The Next War” series edited by Liddell Hart) that conventional air attacks were thought to hold the prospect for mutual deterrence through “a horror unparalleled in the grim annals of war.” He elaborated:

The very magnitude of the disaster that is possible may prove to be a restraining influence. Because the riposte is certain, because it cannot be parried, a belligerent will think twice and again before he initiates a mode of warfare the outcome of which is incalculable. The deterrent influence may, indeed, be greater than that. It may tend to prevent not only raids on cities but resort to war in any shape or form...

At present air attack is regarded as a menace, a withheld thunderbolt, an impending calamity. All nations fear it. For that very reason it should be a deterrent influence against war.¹⁸

The second point, that leaders of the prenuclear age have indeed faced the prospect of utter destruction, is given evidence merely by pointing to the threat to Abydos by Philip V

¹⁵ Quoted in Uri Bialer, *The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980), p. 158.

¹⁶ Frederick M. Sallagar, *The Road To Total War* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1969), p. 15.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ J.M. Spaight, *Air Power in the Next War* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938), p. 126.

of Macedon, the destruction of Melos by Athens, the destruction of Carthage by Rome, and the utter destruction often left in the wake of the Mongols under Ghengis Khan. Commenting on the threat of the Great Khan, a leader of the Persian city of Bukhara noted: "Be silent: it is the wind of God's omnipotence that bloweth, and we have no power to speak."¹⁹

The common view that nuclear weapons and deterrence have made a strategic war "impossible" seems similar to the view made popular in Britain just prior to World War I by Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion*: then-modern economic conditions and interdependence had made war unthinkable for leaders behaving sensibly, because the costs, even to the victor, would be too high.²⁰ The 43 years of general peace, from the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War on January 28, 1871, until August 1, 1914, lent credence to Angell's thesis. Similarly, the 43 years of general peace following World War II are repeatedly presented as "proof" that nuclear weapons have made war "unthinkable" and deterrence secure.

Professor Robert Jervis presents the modern nuclear variant of Angell's position by suggesting that the use of nuclear weapons would render the costs to the victor and vanquished similarly unacceptable. Consequently, Jervis observes that, "if decisionmakers are 'sensible,' peace is the most likely outcome."²¹ Angell's logic undoubtedly was true for most of the players in World War I, and Jervis' point is even more valid today, at least with regard to the superpowers. However, in the past the price to be paid in war did not ensure the peace. Are we now to believe the hopeful assessment that nuclear deterrence will preserve nuclear peace? The point, of course, is that, if the behavior of leaders is more than rational cost-benefit calculations, confident predictions of stability based on such calculations are likely, eventually, to be disappointed.

The following case studies are not meant to suggest that deterrence cannot "work." Indeed, deterrence may have prevented instances of brinkmanship, crisis and war on thousands of occasions that will remain unknown except to those leaders who were deterred. However, strategic deterrence based solely on offensive threat must be nothing short of foolproof, as the first failure would likely result in a holocaust.

The point is that deterrence should not be considered reliable as a means of peacekeeping, because those political factors that can lead to brinkmanship often are beyond U.S. control, and psychological factors leading policymakers to unwarranted miscalculations have not been expunged by the development of nuclear weapons. That is, the effective functioning of deterrence cannot be assumed regardless of how muscular or inoffensive is the U.S. nuclear deterrent and how clearly communicated its commitments.²²

¹⁹ Quoted in Karsten, et al., op. Cit., p. 70.

²⁰ Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion*, Fourth Edition (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1913). Barbara Tuchman reports that Angell's book and thesis had an important impact on British thinking about the likelihood of war prior to World War I. *The Guns of August* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 24-25.

²¹ Robert Jervis, "The Political Effects of Nuclear Weapons: A Comment," *International Security*, Fall 1988, p. 81.

²² Some of the most important contributors to this area of deterrence research have summarized an element of this point nicely, "If one does not threaten the right target for the right reasons, it may not matter how well one does it." Karsten, et

The Russo-Japanese War

The war between Russia and Japan in February of 1904 might have been avoided at the bargaining table had it not been for a breakdown in the decisionmaking process of the Russian Government. Political infighting among the tsar's advisers and irrational judgments by the tsar himself resulted in a war that Japan did not desire and Russia did not expect.

Relations between Russia and Japan became strained in the late 19th Century as Russian expansion turned to the Far East. Through a series of maneuvers in Manchuria and Korea, Russia was rapidly extending its commercial and political influence in Manchuria and the Liaotung Peninsula. Although Russia's expansion was primarily of a commercial nature (e.g. the establishment of a private railroad through Manchuria, and the creation of a timber industry on the banks of the Yalu River), the Japanese government saw these ventures as a Russian scheme to absorb most of Manchuria and Korea. The occupation of Manchuria by Russian troops in 1900 and the leasing of Port Arthur and territory on the Liaotung Peninsula to Russia by the Chinese government caused further alarm in Tokyo.

In August of 1903, Japan opened a new round of negotiations with Russia to alleviate tension in the Far East. Japan offered what amounted to a recognition of Russian interests in Northern Manchuria in exchange for a recognition of Japanese interests in Korea. Seemingly oblivious to Japanese concerns, the tsar declared the disputed areas of Port Arthur and territory on the Liaotung Peninsula a viceroyalty of the Russian Empire. Furthermore, Russia stalled negotiations by delaying its response to the latest (and final) Japanese proposal. Frustrated at the negotiating table, the Japanese attacked the Russian fleet at Port Arthur on February 6, 1904.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the tsar and his advisers were presented with ample warning of Japan's inclinations toward war. Through British and American loans, Japan had acquired a modern navy that rivaled the Russian one.²³ In addition, Japan had secured her position by concluding an alliance with Great Britain in January 1902 and by winning support from the United States through a reaffirmation of the "Open Door" policy. In January 1904, the Japanese ambassador made a final desperate plea for a response from the tsar through informal channels in order to avoid war.²⁴ Despite all of these indications,

al., op. cit., p. xii. Another key contributor to realistic deterrence research, Richard Ned Lebow, states the matter starkly: "Research to date indicates that the utility of deterrence is limited to a narrow range of conflicts: those in which adversarial leaders are motivated largely by the prospect of gain rather than by the fear of loss, have the freedom to exercise restraint, are not misled by grossly distorted assessments of the political military situation, and are vulnerable to the kinds of threats that would-be deterrent is capable of credibly making. Deterrence must be practiced early on, before an adversary commits itself to a challenge and becomes correspondingly insensitive to warnings that such a course of action is likely to result in disaster. Unless these conditions are met, deterrence will be ineffective or counterproductive," Richard N. Lebow, "Deterrence Failure Revisited," *International Security*, Summer 1987, pp. 212-213.

²³ Victor A. Yakhontoff, *Russia and the Soviet Union in the Far East* (London: Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1932), p. 53.

²⁴ Count Sergei Iu. Witte, *Vospominaniia, Tsarstvovanie Nikolaia II*, Volume I (Berlin: Knigoizdatel'stvo "Slovo," 1922), p. 261.

the tsar was shocked by the Japanese attack on Port Arthur, and the Russian military in the Far East was woefully unprepared for war.

For its part, Tokyo communicated its intentions to halt further Russian expansion in the Far East through military force. Japanese efforts to deter Russia's aggressive foreign and commercial policies were not taken seriously in St. Petersburg for a variety of reasons, despite the fact that the Japanese threat was both clear and credible. Political intrigue and personal hostilities split the tsar's chief advisers on Far Eastern policy into separate factions. One faction, which included Minister of Finance Witte, Foreign Minister Lamsdorff and Minister of War Kuropatkin, argued that Russia should seek accommodation with Japan even if that meant relinquishing some of Russia's commercial ventures in the Far East.²⁵ The other faction, which included ex-cavalry officer and special adviser Alexander Bezobrazov and Minister of Internal Affairs Pleve, sought to continue Russia's eastern expansion regardless of Japanese concerns.

As Minister of Internal Affairs, Pleve evidently had his own agenda for pursuing a provocative policy in Korea. Following the outbreak of war in 1904, Pleve remarked to Kuropatkin: "Aleksei Nicholaevich, you don't know the internal situation of Russia. To suppress revolution, we need a small victorious war."²⁶ Bezobrazov's interests were financial. He was directly involved in Russian commercial enterprises (Yalu River timber concession) and stood to profit by further expansion in the area. By 1903, Bezobrazov and his allies had successfully excluded their opponents from the decisionmaking process and had insulated the tsar from opposing views.²⁷

Much of the blame also must fall directly on Tsar Nicholas, whose racist perceptions of the Japanese compelled him to discount the possibility of a Japanese attack.²⁸ When told of Japanese preparations for war by the German Kaiser in November of 1903, Tsar Nicholas replied that "there would be no war, because *he* did not wish it."²⁹ Nicholas simply could not conceive that Japan would dare attack Russia.³⁰ As a result of Russian indifference to Japanese interests, Tokyo saw two possible alternatives in January of 1904: attack Russia or lose its stake in Korea.

World War I

An examination of the European crisis in July and August of 1914 indicates that the First World War was ignited by a series of domestic crises and political misjudgments on the part of the belligerents. For both Austria-Hungary and Russia, the events of July 1914 were

²⁵ Count Sergei Iu. Witte, *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, translated and edited by Abraham Yarmolinsky (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1921), pp. 119-121.

²⁶ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, op. cit., p. 76.

²⁷ The growing dispute between the two groups culminated in the resignation of both Witte and Kuropatkin, although the tsar refused Kuropatkin's resignation. Lamsdorff was excluded from all affairs pertaining to the Far East. Ibid., p. 261.

²⁸ Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, op. cit., p. 76.

²⁹ *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, op. cit., p. 125.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 125.

heavily influenced by domestic politics. The Serbian Crisis did not develop from purely strategic concerns. Rather, Austria-Hungary's decision to punish Serbia for the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand was based largely on domestic political considerations. The multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire, which had lost much of its military and political stature during the 19th Century, was taxed by internal difficulties caused, in no small degree, by nationalist movements within the empire. By making an example of Serbia, Austria-Hungary endeavored to gain respect from its own people as well as from the international community.³¹

Russia found itself in a similar position to that of Austria-Hungary. The Russian Empire had lost some of its stature as a great power following its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and was shaken internally by the Revolution of 1905. Although the Russian economy had rebounded from these crises, the political power of the tsar and the imperial government was still in question. By not intervening on behalf of the Serbs, Tsar Nicholas would have relinquished his role as the champion of Slavs and Orthodoxy, thus further weakening his power and influence in his own country. In the words of Prince Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador to Great Britain:

The position of the Tsar in the eyes of his own people rests to some extent on the mystic nimbus which surrounds the Russian crown by virtue of its function as the Protector of Orthodoxy and Slavdom, and it is clear that the Tsar could not renounce this mission without forfeiting much of his prestige and, perhaps, even endangering his throne.³²

As a consequence of these internal pressures, Tsar Nicholas II saw no other recourse but to exercise his ancient duty as protector of the Orthodox Slavs in the Balkans (i.e. Serbia).

For Germany, a misguided strategy of brinkmanship drew it into the Serbian dispute and elevated a "local" crisis into a continental and, eventually, a World war. While Germany was prepared to fight a continental war against Russia and France, Germany's initial strategy during July of 1914 was not necessarily intended to provoke such a conflict. Rather, Germany had hoped to support its ally Austria-Hungary by keeping Russia at bay through brinkmanship. However, the German leadership failed to appreciate Russia's resolve to support Serbia and, therefore, regarded Russian threats of military intervention as "bluff." In a communiqué to Ambassador Lichnowsky during July of 1914, the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Gottlieb von Jagow, alluded to the improbability of Russian intervention:

To be sure, there will be some agitation in Petersburg, but, on the whole, Russia is not ready to strike at present. According to competent observation, Russia will be prepared to in a few years. Then she will crush us by the number of her soldiers;

³¹ M. Bogitshevich, *Causes of the War* (London: Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1920), pp. 64-65; also Prince Karl Max Lichnowsky, "Delusions (notes made in 1915)," *Heading for the Abyss, Reminiscences by Prince Lichnowsky* (New York: Payson and Clarke, Ltd., 1928), p. 21.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

then she will have built her Baltic Sea fleet and her strategic railroads.... In Russia this is well known, and they are therefore determined to have peace for a few more years yet.³³

Germany's assessment was based almost entirely on military and strategic considerations. By failing to appreciate the tsar's commitment to protect orthodox Slavs in the Balkans, Germany grossly underestimated Russia's determination to support Serbia.

German leaders committed a second fatal error in believing that Great Britain would not become involved in the conflict. This belief was the result both of miscalculation and miscommunication, precipitated by an irrational decisionmaking process. The political intrigues and power struggles within the German diplomatic service induced foreign service officers in Great Britain to report only that which the German Foreign Ministry wished to hear. For this reason, the majority of communiqués from London indicated that Britain was not likely to enter the war.³⁴

A closer examination of the British decision to enter the war has led some scholars to conclude that the final decision was also heavily influenced by domestic politics. According to K. M. Wilson, the two most influential leaders of the British Liberal Party (Prime Minister Asquith and Foreign Minister Grey) supported the British commitment to Belgian neutrality. A large majority in the Liberal Cabinet, although opposed to British involvement in a continental war, fell in behind Asquith and Grey rather than risk losing control of the government to the Conservatives in a coalition.³⁵ While it is incorrect to conclude that Great Britain was driven to war in 1914 by domestic politics, the concern by leading Liberal politicians for the future of their party (and themselves) in office, gave impetus in the British Government to a policy of immediate involvement that did not, at first, have even majority support.

It is not to argue that the events leading to war in 1914 were based on irrational decisions by the leaders of the Great Powers. For the most part, the leaders of Austria-Hungary, Russia, Germany and Great Britain had sound rationale for their actions. Nor is it to say that their decisions were devoid of strategic considerations. However, it is important to stress that many of the decisions in the summer of 1914 were motivated not entirely by "strategic" factors. As in the cases of both Austria-Hungary and Russia, domestic pressures played a significant role in determining the course of events. The balance of forces in Europe and other strategic considerations were only part of the equation. As a result, Germany alone could not succeed in deterring Russia from entering the conflict because it had little or no leverage in influencing the domestic problems that confronted the tsar.

³³ Max Montgelas and Walther Schucking, eds., *Outbreak of the World War, German Documents Collected by Karl Kautsky* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924), No. 72, p. 132.

³⁴ Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, op. cit., pp. 125-126.

³⁵ K.M. Wilson, "The British Cabinet's Decision For War, 2 August 1914," *British Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1975, pp. 148-159.

Germany's initial contention that Great Britain would not enter the war also was not, in and of itself, irrational. It was, however, a miscalculation based on misperception and very poor information. Had German leaders a better understanding of British intentions, the British proposals in late July for Germany and Great Britain to mediate the dispute might have received more serious consideration in Berlin.³⁶

The German Invasion of the Soviet Union

The invasion of the USSR by the German Army on June 22, 1941, resulted in the defeat and retreat of Soviet forces. Although a variety of factors contributed to Germany's success, Stalin's orders to keep Soviet forces on a low level of alert was a leading cause of the disaster. Although the exact purpose behind Stalin's actions remains somewhat inexplicable from a strategic standpoint, it is generally accepted that the Soviet leader had realized that his country was not prepared for war in 1941 and sought to delay a conflict with Germany by remaining nonprovocative. In this manner Stalin hoped to remove any possible pretext for an attack.

Stalin's attempt to appease Hitler by appearing nonbelligerent conceivably could be regarded as a terrible miscalculation in strategy. However, the Soviet leader's refusal to acknowledge German war preparations in the face of irrefutable evidence must be considered irrational. During the spring of 1941, reports from Soviet military commanders at the border and from the Soviet Embassy in Berlin warned of an impending German invasion.³⁷ Not only were such reports ignored by Stalin, but Soviet commanders issuing them were reprimanded and denounced as provocateurs.

The breakdown of the decisionmaking process within the Soviet Army also contributed to the disaster of June 22. Any opportunity for the professional military to offer a serious challenge to Stalin's strategy had disappeared, along with the majority of experienced Soviet officers, during the Great Purge several years earlier. The prospect of facing a firing squad for disagreeing with the "Boss" was very real in the spring of 1941. From the perspective of a Soviet commander, it was far more prudent to accept the situation on the premise that Stalin had some hidden agenda or strategy that would later justify his actions than to run the risk of execution or imprisonment.³⁸ In some cases, Soviet commanders did take matters into their own hands by preparing for attack, but were forced by superiors to

³⁶ Great Britain presented four proposals between July 24 and 28 for Germany and Britain to mediate the crisis. Lebow points out that the proposals were likely rejected because Berlin did not believe Great Britain would enter the conflict. Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

³⁷ A report submitted by Soviet diplomats in Berlin to Moscow in May 1941 warned that a German attack against the Soviet Union could be expected at any moment. See Valentin Berezhkov, *A diplomaticheskoi missiei v Berlin 1940-1941 Tegeran 1943* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo "Uzbekistan," 1971), p. 52.

³⁸ Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov, "Pered voynoi," *Oktiabr'*, No. 11, 1965, p. 147.

remand their orders.³⁹ For all practical purposes, Stalin's purges had destroyed the decisionmaking apparatus of the military.

What lessons have been drawn from the disaster of 1941? Soviet military leaders have argued that Hitler might have been deterred from invading in June of 1941 if the USSR had been better prepared for an attack. In the words of the former Commander of the Soviet Navy, Admiral Kuznetsov:

... For every step taken by Fascist Germany to prepare for war, a responsive measure was needed. The "Barbarossa" plan was worked out in detail and gradually implemented. But seeing that there would be no surprise and the attack would be met by a harsh and prepared rebuff, Hitler might have postponed the implementation of this plan and might not have given the order to attack, just as he had not given the order to carry out operation 'Sea Lion.' An invader is halted and sobered not by the other side's passivity, but by its resolve and readiness to resist.⁴⁰

That a prepared Soviet military would have deterred Hitler from attacking is questionable. Yet, there is no doubt that maintaining a high state of military alert was the only rational policy for the Soviet Union in June of 1941: at best, Hitler would have called off "Barbarossa"; at worst, the Soviet Armed Forces would have fared better during the initial German assault.

In a more recent review of Stalin's strategy, Deputy Chief of the Soviet General Staff, General Colonel Makhmut A. Gareyev, has drawn some conclusions regarding crisis policy that may be indicative of the current Soviet approach to strategic decisionmaking. According to Gareyev, a multiplicity of factors must be accounted for when developing and assessing state policy:

...The harsh lessons of the past testify to the fact that abstract policy in a pure form does not and cannot exist. Policy, including foreign policy, can be vital only if it takes into account the entire set of circumstances of a situation: international, economic, ideological, and, not least of all, interests for the resolution of defense problems.⁴¹

Gareyev notes that the military balance is but one component of the international situation at any given time, and that other variables, such as politics, economics and ideology must be factored into the equation. Furthermore, Gareyev notes that "abstract policy" devoid of other considerations is not viable in the real world.

³⁹ For example, the commander of the Baltic Military District was dressed down for the ordering a blackout prior to the German invasion and war forced to rescind his order. See Marshal Nikolai N. Voronov, *Na sluzhbe voennoi* (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1963), p. 173.

⁴⁰ Kuznetsov, op. cit., p. 171.

⁴¹ General-Colonel Makhmut A. Gareyev, "Velikii Oktiabr' i zashchits Otechestva," *Oktiabr'*, No. 2, 1988, p. 178.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

The Japanese surprise attack against the United States on December 7, 1941, is astounding if one considers the apprehension with which Japan's military leaders accepted its implementation. Many of Japan's most prominent naval commanders predicted that a war with the United States most probably would end in disaster for Japan. Yet the same commanders planned and conducted the attack on Pearl Harbor, thus expediting their own grim prophecies of a Japanese defeat.⁴²

Why did Japan initiate a war that it had little hope of winning? In hindsight, the entire Japanese scheme appears reckless, irrational and devoid of any serious long-term strategic considerations. Most assuredly, the military might and resources of the United States would overcome those of Japan.

In fairness to the Japanese leaders, it is important to point out that their strategy called for a war of limited duration culminating in a negotiated peace with the United States. In this way, Japan believed, it would be possible to resolve its differences with the United States while preserving most of Japan's Pacific empire. Furthermore, Japanese leaders believed that the only alternative to war with the United States was the rapid decay of Japanese power and influence in the Pacific. Although war with the United States was considered a desperate gamble, the leaders of Japan saw it as their only option. Given this scenario, the Japanese plan, although risky, was not irrational.

The Japanese strategy was, however, doomed by a miscalculation regarding U.S. resolve to fight a protracted war. The plan hinged on the erroneous premise that the United States would lose its determination to continue the war and negotiate a peace more or less favorable to Japanese interests within a year's time.⁴³ In reality, the Pearl Harbor attack mobilized strong popular support for the war effort in the United States and destroyed any possibility of conducting a short, limited war with the United States. That the United States would lose its will to fight even after Pearl Harbor was a fatal miscalculation for Japan, which transformed a desperate strategic gamble into certain defeat.

The Falklands War

The propensity for miscalculation and miscommunication between two countries during a crisis still exists in the nuclear age. The Falklands War of 1982 illustrates how a series of miscommunications and miscalculations between a nuclear power (Great Britain) and a nonnuclear power (Argentina) can elevate a domestic crisis into a major conflict.

As in many of the previous case studies, domestic politics was an important catalyst for the Falklands War. The Argentine junta, which was suffering from rapidly declining popular

⁴² Admiral Yamamoto, the architect of the Pearl Harbor attack, had little confidence in a Japanese victory and warned that Japan should avoid a war with the United States. Naval Chief of Staff Admiral Nagano also believed that the possibility of Japanese victory was remote. See Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1981); pp. 9-10; also John Toland, *The Rising Sun* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 86.

⁴³ Scott Sagan, "Origins of the Pacific War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Spring 1988, pp. 914-917.

support, found the recovery of the Falkland Islands to be a political rallying-point and an important diversion from a failing economy.⁴⁴ It has even been suggested that the rise of General Galtieri to power was conditional upon his commitment to recover the Falkland Islands before January 1983, the 150th anniversary of British control.⁴⁵ The junta's strategy was rational from a domestic political perspective. Unfortunately, Great Britain had no chance to alter that perspective, since it was beyond the realm of foreign policy and strategic considerations.

The crisis was further exacerbated by miscommunication between Great Britain and Argentina. For its part, Great Britain did not make clear to Argentina its intentions to defend the Falklands with military force and thus failed to exert sufficient influence over the strategic calculus of the Argentine plan. For many years, Great Britain showed little interest in the Falklands and appeared to be in the process of removing its strategic and political ties to the islands.⁴⁶

Had the British Government displayed a strong commitment to the Falklands during the early stages of the crisis, Argentina may have been deterred from invading. However, a forceful British response occurred too late to alleviate the crisis.⁴⁷ Argentine invasion plans already had been set in motion, and any reversal in policy at this point would have amounted to political suicide for the junta.

Consequently, the Argentine leadership did not regard the seizure of the Falkland Islands to be a particularly risky policy. In the opinion of junta leader General Galtieri:

... Though an English reaction was considered a possibility, we did not see it as a probability. Personally, I judged it scarcely possible and totally improbable. In any case, I never expected such a disproportionate answer. Nobody did. Why should a country situated in the heart of Europe care so much for some islands located so far away in the Atlantic Ocean; in addition, islands which do not serve any national interest? It seems so senseless to me.⁴⁸

The junta committed a second crucial miscalculation in presuming that the United States would not support Great Britain. It was hoped that the United States would remain neutral or would dissuade the British from using military force to recover the islands.⁴⁹ These miscalculations ultimately resulted in a costly and bloody war and political death for Galtieri and the Argentine junta.

⁴⁴ Toward the end of the conflict, General Galtieri vehemently denied that the junta's decision to seize the Falklands was motivated by political and economic problems in Argentina. He did admit, however, the action "helps to unify the Argentinas and that it does more and more." Oriana Fallaci, "Galtieri: No Regrets, No Going Back," *The Times*, June 12, 1982, p. 4; see also Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1983), p. 48.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴⁷ "Falkland Islands—The Origins of a War," *The Economist*, June 19, 1982, p. 43.

⁴⁸ Fallaci, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4; Alexander Haig, *Caveat* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1984), p. 291.

Lessons of the Case Studies

These case studies demonstrate several important points. First, as the events surrounding August 1914 and the invasion of the Falklands demonstrate, domestic political problems, whether of particular leaders or the political system, can be the wellspring for brinkmanship, crisis and war. Would Austria-Hungary have reacted so strongly to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand if its nationalities problem had not appeared so perilous? Would General Galtieri and the junta have invaded the Falklands if they had not faced such difficult domestic political problems?

Such contributory causes of brinkmanship are unlikely to be assuaged by foreign efforts to ensure “stability.” They tend to be obvious and deep rooted or hidden from foreign eyes, and therefore invulnerable to foreign efforts.⁵⁰ This point is not simply of passing interest. The United States has virtually no power significantly to effect the Soviet domestic “nationalities problem” or the Soviet “problem of empire,” and only limited capabilities to affect chronic Soviet economic stagnation. Yet, these are the kinds of problems that might actually compel a future Soviet leadership to see foreign initiative and brinkmanship as the “least miserable option.”⁵¹

Second, brinkmanship and the escalation to war can result from the very human political-psychological factors of misjudgement, miscalculation, misperceptions, lack of information and/or irrationality. Each of the case studies discussed above appears to reflect some element of these factors in the events leading to war. The degree of significance of these factors individually varies in each particular case. Yet, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that singularly or combined they were significant.

Would Tsar Nicholas II have compelled war with Japan if he had not held irrational-racist views of the Japanese, and if his advisers had not been pursuing their own commercial and political agendas? Would Germany have pressed Austria-Hungary toward aggression in 1914 if it had accepted Lichnowsky's view that Britain would fight or understood the Tsar's resolve to protect Serbia? Would Japan have attacked Pearl Harbor if it understood the unifying effect the attack would exert on the American people? Would Britain have reacted so passively to the brewing crisis over the Falklands if it understood the deadly impact that such passivity signaled to the junta?

Although it is impossible to know the answer to such questions, it seems in every case to be “probably not.” The conclusion appears to hold: factors that are generally omitted from “stability analyses,” and are difficult, perhaps impossible, to predict or treat, can contribute significantly to brinkmanship, escalation and war.

The point here is not only that deterrence might fail because a less than fully rational leadership could calculate that nuclear war would be worth the cost.⁵² Equally disturbing is

⁵⁰ Lebow, “The Deterrence Deadlock: Is There A Way Out?” op. cit., p. 184-189.

⁵¹ Herman Kahn often made the point that the only incentive that could drive either Superpower to choose strategic nuclear war would be a situation where war was perceived to be “the least miserable option.”

⁵² This troubling possibility was well presented by Fred Iklé in “Can Nuclear Deterrence Last Out The Century?” *Foreign Affairs*, January 1973, pp. 167-285.

the possibility that fully rational leaders could fail to identify an opponent's firm commitment, or be driven by domestic considerations or psychological tendencies to ignore unwanted calculations, or that the structure of a political system could block implementation of rational decisionmaking during a crisis. The prospect for deterrence failure stems from many more than the canonical possibilities of accident, irrationality or a close calculation that the balance of forces gives an incentive to attack. Yet, U.S. deterrence policy addresses only the last of these possibilities.

Implications for Deterrence

The implications of the above discussion for U.S. strategic policy are fundamental. Policymakers should not be willing to believe the convenient notion that the existence of survivable strategic nuclear forces assures nuclear peace.⁵³ Any such assurances cannot be credible. And force-exchange calculations alone cannot be the basis for conclusions about stability, except at highly abstract levels that alone ought not to be considered an adequate basis for specific policy prescriptions.

Contending prescriptions for U.S. strategic deterrence policy—ranging from a “warfighting” to a “minimum” deterrent—often are debated in highly conceptualized terms as being universally more or less stabilizing.⁵⁴ Each side tends to criticize the other for endorsing a “destabilizing” policy position. However, the advantages for stability of one over the other in actual crisis application, if that could be measured, almost certainly would be affected significantly by immediate political-psychological conditions which are difficult to predetermine.

In addition, the U.S. strategic policy of deterrence, whatever the details and label, is dominated by offensive forces. The significant reduction of societal damage in the event deterrence fails (or is irrelevant) has not been a serious U.S. capability for decades. For the purposes of deterrence the United States has pursued the capability to unleash a nuclear holocaust, but it has virtually no capacity to survive that holocaust. Yet, as was noted above, deterrence theory does not even address some possible causes of brinkmanship, crisis and war. The U.S. strategic policy of deterrence is fundamentally unreliable, but makes no provision for that fact. The danger in this approach to strategic policy exists whether the United States follows a “warfighting” or “minimum” deterrence policy. Either virtually ensures unimaginable levels of destruction if deterrence fails, and both overlook some of the processes that might lead to deterrence failure.

It might be objected that U.S. policy does make provision for the failure of deterrence. It is true that the decades-long trend toward flexibility and limited options in U.S. strategic

⁵³ This view was reflected at a Student Pugwash conference held at the University of California at Berkeley, March 6-7, 1982. Dr. Richard Garwin equated the certainty of deterrence with the law of gravity. This view is as reassuring as it is dangerous. As A.J.P. Taylor observed concerning the historical experience of deterrence, “A deterrent may work ninety-nine times out of a hundred. On the hundredth time it produces catastrophe.”

⁵⁴ For a recent useful review of the contending approaches to strategic deterrence, see Philip Bobbitt, *Democracy and Deterrence: The History and Future of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), especially pp. 134-150.

employment policy reflects an intent to restore deterrence if it initially fails. Yet, such plans to restore deterrence are subject to the same vulnerabilities that could cause its failure. If strategic deterrence has failed as a result of a lack of caution, miscalculation, ignorance, irrationality, etc., there is little reason for confidence that it could then be restored short of high levels of destruction. In effect, the United States relies exclusively on the effective functioning of deterrence to cope with the possibility that deterrence might fail.

In addition, if deterrence fails there is little chance that U.S. counterforce systems could usefully limit societal damage. Given existing and likely U.S. and Soviet strategic forces, it is clear that U.S. counterforce capabilities could not, even under optimistic conditions, significantly reduce damage to the U.S. homeland should the Soviets decide to inflict it.

The level of “general stability” in U.S.-Soviet relations may be such that the risk of deterrence failure is very low—“general stability” stemming from the mutual lack of net incentives to provoke conflict based primarily on non-military factors and regardless of the strategic balance.⁵⁵ This point demonstrates the critical importance of the political context to questions of stability. Despite the fact that the United Kingdom and France have the nuclear capability to annihilate U.S. society, it is reasonable not to worry much about the possibility of deterrence failure vis-a-vis those countries. If U.S.-Soviet political relations reach that level of amity, concern about the unreliability of deterrence would be minimized. However, while U.S.-Soviet relations typically are sufficiently cautious to discourage willful acts of severe provocation, the notion that the possibility for U.S.-Soviet brinkmanship and crisis is a thing of the past is unduly optimistic.

The Imperative for Strategic Defense

The above discussion leads to at least one important conclusion: the ideal U.S. strategic policy would integrate the goal of deterrence with damage-limitation. If the outbreak of war cannot be controlled with greater precision than now appears possible, the United States should pursue those measures that could contribute to surviving the event. Unfortunately, U.S. strategic policy has purposefully rejected damage-limitation as a serious goal. Indeed, the ABM Treaty of 1972 codified the U.S. view that mutual vulnerability could serve as the basis for deterrence stability.⁵⁶

It is this rejection of damage-limitation as a goal worth pursuing that equates to Wild Bill Hickok's choice of seats at the poker table. Hickok's neglect of minimum precautions contributed to his demise; U.S. strategic policy reflects the same trust that events will unfold predictably and without surprise. It *may* be that significant damage-limitation will be illusory for technical reasons. But to the extent that the goal of damage-limitation has purposefully been set aside in deference to an approach to deterrence defined by mutual vulnerability, defenselessness ceases to be merely an unalterable condition and has

⁵⁵ See the discussion in Mueller, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-72.

⁵⁶ The treaty states that ABM systems were to be limited, in part, because such limitations “would lead to a decrease in the risk of outbreak of war involving nuclear weapons.”

become a policy choice.⁵⁷ In an unpredictable international system ultimately characterized by anarchy, choosing to remain vulnerable because of confidence in deterrence is to leave one's back exposed and deliberately to deal oneself the dead man's hand.

The usual argument that damage-limitation must be rejected because defenses are "destabilizing" and their absence is "stabilizing" misses the mark. From the late 1960s to the current SDI debate, very simplistic deterrence considerations have concluded that significant defenses and deterrence are largely incompatible.⁵⁸ However, even within the logical confines of simplified deterrence theory, it is not clear that defenses need be inconsistent with stability.⁵⁹ Complicating any Soviet first-strike planning with U.S. active defenses can be viewed as compatible with traditional deterrence requirements. But more to the point, because the reliability of deterrence is inherently uncertain regardless of U.S. posturing, the preparation for damage limitation ought not to be sacrificed on the basis of an "anti-defense" approach to deterrence. This conclusion obviously offers strong support for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), particularly the original version with its greater emphasis on societal protection. Because deterrence is unreliable, the broad goal of damage-limitation and SDI are vital.

Ballistic missile defense (BMD) would be essential to the prospect for useful levels of damage-limitation.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the Reagan Administration openly justified the SDI more on the basis of maintaining deterrence i.e., that BMD would "complicate" any Soviet first-strike planning, than on societal protection. The Administration "led with its chin" in

⁵⁷ That the United States has, in fact, set aside damage-limitation in deference to a particular approach to deterrence was discussed in Iklé, op. cit., pp. 268-270, and has often been formally acknowledged. For example, in Harold Brown's words, "In the interests of stability, we avoid the capability of eliminating the other side's deterrent, insofar as we might be able to do so. In short, we must be quite willing—as we have been for some time—to accept the principle of mutual deterrence, and design our defense posture in light of that principle, *Department of Defense Annual Posture Statement for FY 1980* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 29, 1979), p. 61.

⁵⁸ From the early ABM debate, see, for example, Richard Garwin and Hans Bethe, "Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems," originally published by *Scientific American*, March 1968, reprinted in *Arms Control: Readings from Scientific American*, with introduction by Herbert York (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1973), pp. 165-167; George Rathjens, "A Breakthrough in Arms Control," and W.K. Panofsky, "Roots of the Strategic Arms Race," both in *Science and Public Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 6, June 1971, p. 5 and p. 20, respectively. During the SALT I hearings Gerard Smith told Congress that the mutual vulnerability promoted by BMD limitations would make a first strike "inconceivable." See *U.S. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Military Implications of the Treaty on the Limitations of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems and Interim Agreement on Limitations of Strategic Offensive Arms, Hearings* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 286. The more recent SDI debate has witnessed similar simplistic discussions of deterrence and defense. See, for example, U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *Ballistic Missile Defense Technologies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1985), pp. 101-136; Union of Concerned Scientists, *Space-Based Missile Defense* (Cambridge, MA: March 1984), pp. 79-84; Strobe Talbott, "The Case Against Star Wars Weapons," *Time*, May 7, 1984, p. 82; and Sidney Drell et al., "Preserving the ABM Treaty: A Critique of the Reagan Strategic Defense Initiative," *International Security*, Fall 1984, p. 81.

⁵⁹ See, for example, the discussions in Wilkening, Watman, op. cit., pp. 21-38; Chrzanowski, op. cit., pp. 39-44; Roy Radner "Model of Defense-Protected Build-Down," *Strategic Defense and Arms Control*, Alvin M. Weinberg and Jack N. Barkenbus, eds. (New York: Paragon House Publishers 1988), pp. 111-142; and in the same book, Alvin M. Weinberg, "Speculations on a Strategist's Perspective," *Ballistic Missile Defense*, Ashton Carter, David Schwartz, eds. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1984), pp. 42-46; Donald G. Brennan, "The Case For Population Defense," *Why ABM?*, Johan Holst, William Schneider eds. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1968), pp. 100-106.

⁶⁰ It may also require a combination of arms reductions, civil defense, air defense and antisubmarine warfare.

this regard. It is not clear that BMD is necessary to provide the retaliatory threat required by U.S. deterrence policy—Soviet first-strike planning is highly complicated even in the absence of BMD. Yet, the *weakness* of deterrence fully justifies damage-limitation as a national security goal and the SDI as a means of pursuing that goal.

In addition, it may be the role BMD could play for damage-limitation that provides a unique contribution to deterrence. Historical case studies demonstrate the importance of credibility in the functioning of deterrence.⁶¹ A capability for damage limitation may be necessary in many circumstances to provide the U.S. deterrent with the necessary level of credibility. By reducing the risk that the United States would confront in a crisis, damage-limitation might lessen the chance that an opponent could hope to paralyze American leaders with the fear of escalation, and thereby escape the U.S. deterrent threat. Consequently, strategic defense may have a unique role in support of the traditional norms of deterrence, but that role need not be separate from a goal of damage-limitation.

In summary, this brief review of deterrence theory and history suggests that the offense-dominated U.S. policy of strategic deterrence has some critical deficiencies. Historically, a primary cause of brinkmanship has involved domestic political problems that are largely immune to external correction and are “outside” deterrence theory. Consequently, the United States may have little or no control over the factors that could lead the Soviet Union toward brinkmanship. In addition, the U.S. theory of strategic deterrence simply is not based on a realistic assumption about political decisionmaking. It “rests on certain dubious psychological assumptions,” and ignores important psychological mechanisms such as *denial* and *bolstering* that facilitate miscalculation. And, the advent of nuclear weapons does not appear to have corrected these human psychological “weaknesses.” Brinkmanship and crisis outside of U.S. control could compel the United States into a conflict for reasons that are not accounted for in deterrence theory. Such a chain of events may be of low probability; but U.S. deterrence policy does not even address the possibility, and the result could be catastrophic.

It is not apparent how this deficiency in a policy of strategic deterrence can be accommodated except through the “insurance” of a damage-limitation capability. This need for the integration of deterrence and damage-limitation goals underscores the value of BMD. It will be unfortunate if official discussions of the SDI program continue to move away from the prospective BMD role for damage limitation. Therein appears to reside the unique contribution of strategic defense to deterrence, both in the hope for its success and the possibility of its failure. The United States needs the possibility of relief in the event deterrence fails or is irrelevant, and SDI could be a long stride toward that possibility.

⁶¹ Karsten, et al., op. cit., pp. 13, 71-83.