

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 14 | Number 1

Article 13

7-4-1984

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Recommended Citation

Colin S. Gray, "COMPARATIVE STRATEGIC CULTURE," *Parameters* 14, no. 1 (1984), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.1352.

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COMPARATIVE STRATEGIC CULTURE

by

COLIN S. GRAY

The purpose of this article is to examine a three-part proposition:

- The concept of strategic culture is a useful tool for better understanding ourselves, others, and how others view us.

- Just as cultural awareness can enlighten, so the "fog of culture" can restrict understanding.¹

- Restricted understanding of the strategic culture of others can be very dangerous for international peace and security.

As with many concepts alleged to have explanatory power, strategic culture lends itself to abuse. To be useful it has to be corralled and employed in a disciplined way—or, at the least, it has to be used with an awareness of the pitfalls that await the unwary. Needless to say, perhaps, we are interested not only in strategic culture, in the attitudes and beliefs that flow from a distinctive national experience, but also in national style in behavior.

Discovery of the obvious can be important. Thanks to the rise of the idea and political organization of nation-states, it has long been appreciated (if not infrequently overappreciated) that Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Americans (etc.) had qualities as Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Americans (etc.). Notwithstanding its multinational, and certainly multi-ethnic, foundations, the United States has had a very clear sense of national identity, a sense that there exists a distinct "us" and that all others are "them" (more or less carefully differentiated), while at the same time American strategic thinkers

have tended to be curiously insensitive to possible national differences in modes of strategic thought and behavior.²

American strategists have always known, deep down, that Soviet, French, British, and other approaches to security issues differed from their own in good part because Soviet, French, and British policymakers were heirs to distinctive national perspectives. It has long been appreciated that those national perspectives should be comprehensible through an appropriate combination of historical, geographical, anthropological, psychological, and sociological study. However, the recognition of national differences has only very rarely moved the US government in its conduct of affairs to take explicit account of the effects of those differences upon policy goals and methods.³ In the late 1970s, American defense commentators discovered what they really had known all along—that the Soviet Union did not appear to share many of the more important beliefs and practices beneficial to the American idea of international order. This should have come as no surprise, but it did. Although the Western strategic literature of the past quarter-century is replete with warnings against the practice of mirror-imaging and projecting American desires and perspectives uncritically upon Moscow, those warnings by and large proceeded unheeded until the late 1970s. At the present time the US defense community is in a situation where it acknowledges the apparent fact of national cultural and stylistic differences—a great advance—but has yet to

determine what those differences should mean for US policy.

Two works lead the way in this field: Jack Snyder's RAND report on *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (September 1977),⁴ and Ken Booth's book *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (1979). Neither of these were towering works of scholarship, but like Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*,⁵ they dignified and elevated insight to the level of principle.

The concept of strategic culture is a direct descendant of the concept of political culture—which has been debated, developed, variously employed, and even more variously defined by political scientists since the early 1950s.⁶ The idea of national style is derived logically from the concept of political culture: a particular culture should encourage a particular style in thought and action. One notices, for example, that the Soviet Union frames its defense tasks in ways generally unfamiliar to the United States, and behaves in defense-related matters in a fashion inexplicable in standard American terms. These differences in observable thought and practice have so enduring a character that even when idiosyncratic possibilities are factored out, it is plausible to hypothesize that the Soviet Union has approached, and continues to approach, defense issues in a fairly distinctive Soviet manner—comprehensible only in those terms. In order to understand why the Soviet Union thinks and behaves as it does, it should be useful to seek to trace that thought and behavior to fundamentally influencing factors, always presuming that there are some fundamentally influencing factors. While fully accepting the possible dangers of crude reductionism (if one or more allegedly “determining factors” are identified),⁷ of insensitivity to change (even culture and style will alter over time), and of finding undue cultural distinctiveness (if one looks for that which is culturally different in American terms one is very likely to find it), the potential benefit for the quality of prediction and understanding of defense performance seems to be overwhelming.

It is a fact that the discovery of cultural distinctiveness in strategic thought and practice has been attended, probably inevitably, by an unduly simple appreciation of this dimension to strategic affairs.⁸ As caveats, one should note that:

- Some strategic-cultural traits are common to many supposedly, and even truly, distinctive cultures.

- A strategic culture may accommodate several quite distinctive strategic subcultures (which may have more in common with some foreign strategic cultures than they have with their dominant national culture).

- Many, and probably most, alleged strategic cultural traits are fully rational, in strict *realpolitik* terms, given the perceived historical experience of the nations in question. The strategic cultural thought processes and (derived) behavior of interest here do not, noticeably, rest upon individual psycho-cultural phenomena (e.g. the child-rearing practice of Great Russian mothers and the like).

- From time to time a state may act in ways that represent a break from its traditional, dominant strategic culture.

The strategic culture thesis has its roots in a concern that was flagged informatively by Snyder. He wrote as follows:

It is useful to look at the Soviet approach to strategic thinking as a unique “strategic culture.” Individuals are socialized into a distinctively Soviet mode of strategic thinking. As a result of this socialization process, a set of general beliefs, attitudes and behavioral patterns with regard to nuclear strategy has achieved a state of semipermanence that places them on the level of “culture” rather than mere “policy.” Of course, attitudes may change as a result of changes in technology and the international environment. However, new problems are not assessed objectively. Rather, they are seen through the perceptual lens provided by the strategic culture.⁹

The intriguing and potentially enlightening idea of strategic culture becomes a

distorting idea when defense commentators research too eagerly, and too uncritically, for the cultural roots of contemporary defense practice. Although one can compare and contrast Soviet with American cultures, the comparison and contrast would often be far less stark were the full range of American and possibly Soviet attitudes to be assessed, as opposed only to the policy-dominant ones.¹⁰ As with sound geopolitical analysis, one discerns through strategic-cultural analysis influences rather than rigid predeterminants. Nevertheless, contemporary American, Soviet, et al. strategic commentators have to be very much the products of their particular, unique, cultural milieus.

It is hypothesized here that there is a discernible American strategic culture. That culture, referring to modes of thought and action with respect to force, derives from perceptions of the national historical experience, aspirations for cultural conformity (e.g. as an American, what am I and how should I feel, think, and behave?), and from all of the many distinctively American experiences (of geography, political philosophy and practice [i.e. civic culture], and way of life) that determine an American culture.

First, it is suggested here that there is an American (and, *ab extensio*, other) strategic culture which flows from geopolitical, historical, economic, and other unique influences. Second, it is suggested that American strategic culture provides the

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milieu within which strategic ideas and defense policy decisions are debated and decided. Third, it is suggested that an understanding of American strategic culture and style can help explain why American policymakers have made the decisions that they have. Moreover, if greater light can thus be shed upon past and present, it may be possible to employ the concept of strategic culture (and style) to predict tendencies in behavior in the future.

It must be admitted that, as yet, it is unclear just how helpful studies of strategic culture may prove to be. However, it does not seem inappropriate to assert at least the following potential benefits:

- An improved understanding of our own, and other, cultures in local terms.
- An improved ability to discern enduring policy motivations and to make predictions.
- An improved ability to communicate what is intended to be communicated.¹¹
- An improved ability to understand the meaning of events in the assessment of others.

A rather obvious danger in this theme lies in the realm of cultural relativism. Soviet drives for further influence abroad need be no less menacing because Americans think they understand what lies behind them. The central problem for the US government is not so much to understand Soviet power as it is to contain that power (which is not to demean the virtue of understanding). Moreover, it is not suggested here, implicitly or explicitly, that American policy necessarily should be changed solely because its frame of conceptual reference may fit poorly with that identified for the USSR.

Virtually by definition, strategic culture and national style have very deep roots within a particular stream of historical experience—as locally interpreted. While it is not assumed that culture and style are immutable—that would be absurd—it is assumed that national patterns of thought and action, the preferred way of coping with problems and opportunities, are likely to

alter only very gradually, short of a new historical experience which few people can deny warrants a historically discontinuous response. There is not a Russian/Soviet strategic culture and national style that is fixed for all time. The Soviet Union of 1984 is clearly different from the Soviet Union of 1937-38. But, pending some major system shocks, the weight of the past and the way the past is interpreted as a guide (largely implicit) to the present, far outweighs in enduring importance the marginal changes in culture discernible year by year.

It is my contention that major streams of policy decisions in the United States and the Soviet Union cannot simply be explained in terms of the characteristics of particular people, their unique assessment of policy options, and the bureaucratic-political milieu in which they find themselves. It is necessary to consider the strategic culture of the various policymakers. While aberrant, culturally innovative, or just plain eccentric decision-making is always possible, there is a tendency for policymakers of a particular strategic culture to make policy in ways, and substantively, that are congruent with the bounds of that culture. A national style, to endure and attain that status, is a style that "works," well enough, for a particular nation. A national style is not the random product of imaginative thinking by policymakers; instead it is a pattern of national response to challenge which has worked adequately in the past. This really is a truth by definition, because a strategic culture and national style that failed to meet objective tests of adequacy imposed by external security politics would lead inexorably to the political, if not always physical, demise of the nation.

Although strategic-cultural analysis should not incline one to judge that identified American proclivities are inappropriate simply because they are incongruent with the known tendencies of adversaries, neither should one be content to assert complacently that each party simply is what it is. Strategy, in good part, is a matter of adaptation to perceived reality, and some societies have adapted more effectively than others. It is not enough just to note the more persuasive

details of "the American way" and "the Soviet way"; more important is the question of how those ways would likely fare if ever they were tested in direct conflict. To date, at least, the very few studies of comparative strategic culture and style that have appeared have not ventured into the realm of the implications for US policy. The inherent merit of American strategic thinking is not the issue—this is not a contest in intellectual aesthetics—the real issue is how appropriate American ideas (and ideas made into policy) are in a conflict process with a particular adversary.

Much that a country does, or attempts to do, is done for reason of force of circumstance, real or apparent. A central problem with cultural/stylistic explanations of distinctive national thought and behavior is that alternative hypotheses may serve to explain the phenomena in question. The determined and ruthless theorist usually can find impressive *ex post facto* empirical support for his theorizing.

The potential problem of multiple-causation may easily be overstressed. Assessed in isolation, quite a wide range of theories may be invoked to explain American and Soviet defense behavior. To sift these theories for their plausibility and their explanatory power, one needs to engage in cross-cultural analysis. For example, if one has a structural theory of US defense policy behavior that identifies the military-industrial complex and bureaucratic politics as the collective determinant of defense policy output, then how does one account for the fact that the Soviet military-industrial complex, together with Soviet bureaucratic politics, produces a very different policy output? The answer, presumably, has to be that the industrial-bureaucratic-political forces in the two superpowers are differently configured. But, even if this is true, as seems self-evident, one then has to ask why those forces are configured differently. In short, even the "structural-determinist" cannot evade the issue of possible cultural impact upon the analysis.

While there is no great difficulty identifying apparent American, Soviet, British, et al. approaches to national security,

it is less obvious that those different approaches reflect anything more peculiar than a uniqueness of historical and geographic circumstances. In other words, Americans and Russians may be different as individuals in ways of thought, but such differences are not important here. Of interest is state, not individual, behavior, and what is required is an open mind as to the possibility that very different national experiences tend to produce different policy responses.

In asserting, as a hypothesis, that Great Russians think differently about national security issues than do Americans, one need not imply anything about the "curious" psychology of individual Great Russians or Americans. Instead, one may simply imply that the geopolitical inheritance of the two peoples is very different and that that inheritance has (locally) natural, even inevitable, consequences for contemporary assessments of security problems.

It is important that the cultural/stylistic theme not be muddled in appraisal by views on the merits, or shortcomings, of national character analysis. This analysis confines itself to asserting that:

- Each state has a unique, distinctive, history.
- Each state learns (or mislearns) from its assessment of that unique, distinctive history.
- And each state, having a unique, distinctive history, is very likely to learn and mislearn a wisdom for statecraft different from that of other states.

It is not too difficult to find in the history of each state experiences quite closely analogous (at least superficially) to those of many others. For example, following Booth, one can show that the American military experience is sufficiently rich and varied as to cast doubt upon all simple assertions concerning "the American way in war."¹² Many, if not most, allegedly American cultural traits in warfare, and approaches to warfare, can be found elsewhere. Booth is correct. However, in his worthy determination to slay the dragon of myths concerning the convenient metaphor of "American Strategic

Man," he neglects to address the still-valid question, What, if any, are the implications for defense and international security of the unique American geopolitical experience? To be truly useful, the exercise of destruction requires a follow-up, constructive, phase.

It must be emphasized that while understanding across cultural lines is always useful, international security problems cannot be defined solely in terms of misunderstanding. It is desirable that Western policymakers and ordinary citizens understand that the Soviet threat is of an enduring character and has very deep roots in the Russian reaction to its unique historical experience. But the predominant US problem is to contain Soviet power. To the extent that Western policymakers can appreciate that they are dealing with a fundamentally unfriendly culture, rather than with an ephemeral, unfriendly policy, to that extent cultural analysis may help remove illusions and wishful thinking from official deliberations.

It would be difficult to design two countries more likely to misunderstand each other than the United States and the Soviet Union, notwithstanding some macrocosmic similarities between them. Both countries have an unusual degree of insularity in their world views. In the American case there were the facts of oceanic distance isolating the new nation and the deliberate rejection of older models of political organization and practice. In the Russian case there was, and remains, both geographical distance and the security apparatus of the state strictly controlling traffic between Russia and the West. Also, both countries have messianic ideologies, though in the American case the light that was lit on Plymouth Rock was to be a beacon that would inspire by example. The geopolitical basis for Soviet-American rivalry lies in the simple process of great-power elimination. World Wars I and II destroyed Europe's multipolar balance of power. By 1945 the United States was the only country capable of organizing a security system that could restrict the freedom of Soviet policy

action, just as the Soviet Union was the only country capable of threatening to impose an imbalance of power in Europe.¹³

Soviet-American rivalry often can be difficult to explain to a people that is not in the habit of thinking geopolitically.¹⁴ After all, the Soviet Union does not appear to covet American territory, and the threats that it poses to American survival interests flow from the American assumption of security commitments around the periphery of Europe and Asia.¹⁵ The American quarrel with the Soviet Union is of the same kind as the British quarrel with Imperial Germany between 1900 and 1914; the insular power, Great Britain then, the United States today, cannot tolerate the domination of Europe, or of Eurasia, by a single continental power or coalition.¹⁶

The Soviet quarrel with the United States, in terms of geopolitics, is very fundamental, indeed. In Soviet perception the political control the Soviet state exercises over the non-Great Russian regions of the USSR is supported by the firmness of Soviet political control over Eastern Europe. But the political stability of Eastern Europe as an essential part of the Soviet empire is menaced by the attractive power of the independent states of Western Europe, and the security and political independence of Western Europe is underwritten by the United States.¹⁷

Whether Soviet patterns of thought and behavior, culture and style, are more Soviet than Great Russian is a matter of little interest, though a strong case can be advanced to the effect that the Soviet Union today is the Great Russian Empire of yesterday with the overlay of an ideology with global pretensions.

What can be determined concerning Soviet/Russian strategic culture? Key characteristics include the following:

- An insatiable quest for national security that has no boundaries compatible with the security of others. The USSR is seeking total security.

- An assumption that international politics is a permanent struggle for power. War and peace and "war in peace" (cold war)

are but different phases of a continuous process in which countries rise or fall.

- A belief that militarily one cannot be too strong (in Benjamin Lambeth's words, "too much is not enough").¹⁸ One cannot achieve a sufficiency of national military power. The Soviet Union does not acknowledge the idea that their weapons could be a threat to peace, or could promote instability. The Soviet Union has a political and strategic view, rather than a technical view, of what is and what is not stabilizing.

- A confidence in unilateral military prowess and a great unwillingness to repose important security functions in anticipation of restraint on the part of others.¹⁹

- A recognition that war is always possible and that the duty of soldiers is to fight and win, should the politicians make the decision to fight. Soviet strategic culture does not accommodate the idea that the USSR should design its forces to favor criteria that bear more upon the arms race or crisis management than they do upon war-waging effectiveness. In fact, by way of contrast, in the most important realm of stability analysis of a technical kind, that is to say with reference to "command stability,"²⁰ the Soviet Union has practiced stability while the United States largely has confined itself to talking about it.²¹

- Soviet military strategy is the product of the Soviet military establishment. A decision to fight, and the definition of the political objectives, will of course be within the province of civilians. But once a decision to fight is taken, the Soviet military is unlikely to wage war in the tentative "bargaining" manner outlined by some American theorists as being appropriate to the nuclear age.²²

By way of some contrast, important characteristics of American strategic culture include the following:

- A disinclination to prepare very seriously for the actual conduct of war. For 38 years Americans have told themselves that their policy will have failed if ever a nuclear weapon is used. This is a limited truth which has served to discourage professional preparation for bilateral conflict. US policy

thinking, by and large, terminates abruptly with a putative breakdown in prewar deterrence.²³

- An enduring conviction that somehow, and despite the evidence to the contrary, arms control agreements can help alleviate US security problems. Arms control activity is held to be activity for peace, and the United States, naturally, must abide by the "spirit" as well as by the ambiguous letter of agreements.²⁴

- A faith in high technology and, indeed, generically in panaceas of a managerial and technical kind. Witness the contemporary confidence concerning the promise of smart-weapon technology for deep strikes in Europe.

- A continuing faith in progress, that somehow international politics could evolve toward a condition of greater security. No US president has explained to the American people the enduring geopolitical basis to Soviet-American rivalry. The American people believe, or want to believe, that things can change for the better.

- An arrogance of belief that the American strategic enlightenment was *The Truth*. For years, in and around the SALT forum, Americans lectured Soviet officials on strategic stability, on what fueled arms races, and on what was dangerous in a crisis. In fact, Soviet officials seem not to have had any great difficulty understanding American stability theory, the conviction that societies should remain vulnerable to nuclear retaliation; they understood and rejected it.

Soviet intentions are written in Russian and Soviet history, are inherent in the geostrategic logic of the Soviet security condition, as interpreted by Soviet officials, and cannot easily be deduced from Soviet military preparations. In common with the United States, the Soviet Union wishes to prevent war, but Soviet leaders also seek to intimidate through the shadow cast by their military power, and they believe that the better able the Soviet Union is to fare well in war, the less likely it is that war will occur.²⁵

Just as the prospect of being hung in the morning is supposed, wonderfully, to concentrate the mind—so the shift in the strategic

balance in the 1970s served wonderfully to persuade US governments that they needed a strategic-forces establishment that made military sense (it may be noticed that Great Britain enjoyed a similar awakening enforced by events in the very late 1930s). A liberal democracy, contemplating armed conflict as a distant prospect, will be wont to indulge its hopes rather than its distant fears. There is some danger that should war occur, the United States and NATO-Europe, in accordance with their "peacetime" strategic culture, will be striving to limit the war, control escalation, identify "firebreaks," and the like. Meanwhile the Soviet Union, with its military machine firmly in military hands "for the duration," will be waging the war to win, governed in its operational decisions only by considerations of military efficiency.²⁶

NOTES

This article is an edited version of a lecture delivered at the National War College on 4 January 1984. A small fraction of this article appeared in "National Style in Strategy: The American Example," *International Security*, 6 (Fall 1981).

1. Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croom, Helm, 1979), p. 9.

2. This thesis pervades Booth's analysis (*ibid.*, particularly ch. 1).

3. Prominent among the rare officially commissioned studies in this field are Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (New York: Meridian, 1974, first pub. 1946); and Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951). Leites' study, admittedly, draws far more heavily upon Soviet ideology than it does upon evidence of cultural traits.

4. Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, R-2154-AF (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, September 1977).

5. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (London: Methuen, 1975, first pub. 1890). Mahan "discovered" what the Royal Navy had been practicing as best it was able for two and a half centuries.

6. See Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1979), ch. 1; Dennis Kavanaugh, *Political Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1972); A. H. Brown, *Soviet Politics and Political Science* (London: Macmillan, 1974), ch. 4; and Robert Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy: Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs* (New York: Knopf, 1983).

7. As David Holloway observes, in the context of changes in Soviet military doctrine, "one should not take an 'essentialist' view of Soviet policy, seeing it as springing from some innate characteristic of Russian culture or the Soviet system, impervious to phenomena in the real world." ("Military Power and Political Purpose in Soviet Policy," *Daedalus*, 109 [Fall 1980], 28.) For a full statement of

Holloway's views, see his important study, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1983).

8. A counterattack against cultural analysis, or—to be fair—against the inappropriate application of cultural analysis, has been launched by Scott Sagan of Harvard in his critical review of Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy*. See *Survival*, 25 (July/August 1983), 191-92.

9. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture*, p. v.

10. The "war-fighting" theory of deterrence which long has held unambiguous sway as the authoritative Soviet approach to defense preparation is not totally bereft of American adherents. In fact, American nuclear strategy, from NSDM-242 of 1974, through PD-59 of 1980, NSDD-13 of 1981, NSDD-32 of 1982, and the "Scowcroft Commission" Report of 1983, reflects a very clear evolution of thought in the direction of a "war-fighting" theory of deterrence. See Jeffrey Richelson, "PD-59, NSDD-13 and The Reagan Strategic Modernization Program," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 6 (June 1983), 125-46; The President's Commission on Strategic Forces, *Report* (Washington: April 1983), particularly p. 7 ("Deterrence . . . requires military effectiveness"); and Colin S. Gray, "War-fighting for Deterrence," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 7 (March 1984).

11. Some commentators have harbored the illusion that as a consequence of much better understanding, the United States could orchestrate an interdiction campaign vis à vis Soviet policymaking to influence their internal debate. This idea is attractive, but almost certainly is infeasible. Appropriate comment has been made by David Holloway: "These elements [Soviet conceptions of security and attitudes to military power, strongly influenced by Russian and Soviet history and state structure] do make it difficult for Western governments to exert remote and precise pressure on Soviet military decisions: the policy-making process is largely closed to outside influence." ("Military Power and Political Purpose in Soviet Policy," p. 28.)

12. Ken Booth, "American Strategy: The Myths Revisited," in Booth and Moorhead Weight, eds., *American Thinking About Peace and War* (Hassocks, Sussex, England: Harvester, 1978), pp. 1-35.

13. Capability has a way of defining rivalry, if not enmity. At the close of the First World War, the US government identified British and Japanese naval power as the principal threats to American security, while in the same period, no less naturally, Great Britain was worried about the building program for the US fleet and about the airpower imbalance that it predicted vis à vis France. As the dominant power on the continent of Europe in 1919, France inevitably excited British anxiety. Similarly, in 1944-45 the Soviet Union, courtesy of victory in war, assumed the erstwhile German role as principal threat to the balance of power in Europe.

14. For example, see Thomas Powers, "What Is It About?" *The Atlantic*, 253 (January 1984), 35-55. "It" is the Soviet-American global competition.

15. On the subject of American national interests, see Donald E. Neuchterlein, "National Strategy: The Need for Priority," in Terry L. Heyns, ed., *Understanding U.S. Strategy: A Reader* (Washington: National Defense Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 35-63; and Colin S. Gray, *Long-Range Planning and American Security Interests* (Fairfax, Va.: National Institute for Public Policy, January 1984).

16. Classic explanations of this reasoning are Sir Eyre Crowe, "England's Foreign Policy," in Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., *Politics and the International System* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1969), pp. 384-86; and Nicholas J. Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944).

17. On the character and dynamics of Soviet territorial

and hegemonic imperialism, see Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983).

18. *How to Think About Soviet Military Doctrine*, P-5935 (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, February 1978), p. 7. Also see Rebecca V. Strode, "Soviet Strategic Style," *Comparative Strategy*, 3 (No. 4, 1982), 319-39.

19. See John Erickson, "The Soviet View of Deterrence: A General Survey," *Survival*, 24 (November/December 1982), 242-51.

20. See John D. Steinbruner, "National Security and the Concept of Strategic Stability," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 22 (September 1978), 411-28.

21. See John D. Steinbruner, "Nuclear Decapitation," *Foreign Policy*, No. 45 (Winter 1981-82), pp. 16-28; Desmond Ball, *Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?* Adelphi Paper No. 169 (London: IISS, Autumn 1981); and Paul Bracken, *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1983). All three of these authors are pessimistic over the ability of both superpowers to control their nuclear forces in war. I find their pessimism understandable, but excessive.

22. Preeminently in the brilliant writings of Thomas C. Schelling. See his book *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1966). A very pertinent analysis of the American theory of limited war, and related ideas, is Stephen Peter Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War," *International Security*, 7 (Fall 1982), 83-113.

23. As numerous people have observed, American strategic thinking leaves the field precisely when it would most be needed. This is not to say, of course, that the uniformed services have neglected their war-planning duties. In that regard see David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-1960," *International Security*, 7 (Spring 1983), 3-71; Desmond Ball, *Targeting for Strategic Deterrence*, Adelphi Paper No. 185 (London: IISS, Summer 1983); and Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and Strategic Planning*, Philadelphia Policy Papers (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1984). As often as not what purports to be applied strategy is really little more than capabilities planning.

24. For an analysis of a "back to basics" character, see Colin S. Gray, "Arms Control: Problems," in James Woolsey, ed., *Nuclear Arms: Ethics, Strategy, Politics* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1984).

25. An important recent article discussing possible changes in the official Soviet attitude toward war and the utility of nuclear force is Dan L. Strode and Rebecca V. Strode, "Diplomacy and Defense in Soviet National Security Policy," *International Security*, 8 (Fall 1983), 91-116. Notwithstanding the strength of competing convictions with which Western commentators debate the issue of whether or not the Soviet Union believes it could win a nuclear war, few people would dissent from the following characterization of the Soviet perspective offered by David Holloway: "The Soviet leaders have been forced to recognize that their relationship with the United States is in reality one of mutual vulnerability to devastating nuclear strikes, and that there is no immediate prospect of escaping from this relationship. Within the constraints of this mutual vulnerability they have tried to prepare for nuclear war, and they would try to win such a war if it came to that. But there is little evidence to suggest that they think victory in a global nuclear war would be anything other than catastrophic." (*The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, p. 179).

26. See John J. Dziak, *Soviet Perceptions of Military Power: The Interaction of Theory and Practice* (New York: Crane, Russak [for the National Strategy Information Center], 1981).