



Strategic Power and National Security

J. I. COFFEY



**Strategic
Power
and
National
Security**

J. I. Coffey

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH PRESS

TO MY FATHER

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 75-158188

ISBN 0-8229-3229-6

Copyright © 1971, J. I. Coffey

All rights reserved

Henry M. Snyder & Co., Inc., London

Manufactured in the United States of America

STRATEGIC POWER AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Preface

With the possible exception of the war in Vietnam, no subject has been so hotly debated in recent years as that of the relative priority to be accorded programs for “the common defense” as against those for “the general welfare.” Many highly placed and well-informed Americans have argued that the growth of Soviet military capabilities, the advent of Communist China as a nuclear power, and the rapid changes in many parts of the globe pose threats to U.S. interests which necessitate powerful (and expensive) armed forces. Others, equally well qualified, maintain that the threats are exaggerated, that smaller (and less costly) forces would suffice to insure American security, and that valid domestic requirements have too long been sacrificed to marginal military ones.

This book represents an effort to address one part of that issue: the requirements for strategic nuclear forces. It has focused on these forces for three reasons: (1) the United States has recently begun several new weapons programs and is planning others, such as a new bomber and an underwater missile launch system, which would affect both the composition and the costs of strategic offensive and defensive forces for years to come; (2) there are still opportunities for making meaningful adjustments in those programs, either unilaterally or through the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks in which the United States and the USSR are now engaged; and (3) strategic nuclear forces play so important a role that any inquiry into American defense policy, any exami-

nation of American military requirements, must begin by looking at the implications for national security of various levels and types of strategic weapons systems.

As is true in most cases, this assessment of the relationship between strategic power and national security represents the culmination of years of work, the results of which have from time to time appeared in print. Although no section of the book consists merely of reprints, several have drawn heavily upon material published elsewhere. I should, therefore, like to make special mention of an article on "Strategic Superiority, Deterrence and Arms Control," which appeared in *Orbis*, XIII, no. 4 (Winter 1970) and formed the genesis of chapter 3; and of the paper "Threat, Reassurance, and Nuclear Proliferation" in Bennett Boskey and Mason Willrich, eds., *Nuclear Proliferation: Prospects for Control* (New York: Dunellen Publishing Co., 1970), which appears in part in chapter 5.

I should also like to acknowledge the assistance I have received on this book. Dr. Morton Halperin, currently with the Brookings Institution; Dr. Johann J. Holst of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs; Captain Donald A. Mahley, United States Army; and Professor Frederick C. Thayer of the University of Pittsburgh all read the manuscript in draft, with varying degrees of pleasure. Captain Mahley, Mr. Jean Abinader, and Mr. Kenneth C. Thompson, all students in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs of the University of Pittsburgh, helped with the research. Julianna Mahley was largely instrumental in producing seemingly innumerable drafts, and my wife, Rosemary K. Coffey, was responsible for editing the last of them. Finally, the LaSalle-Adams Fund paid for some of the research and typing. To all those contributors named—and others unnamed who also helped in one way or another—my thanks.

J. I. COFFEY

May 1971

Contents

Lists of Tables	<i>vii</i>
Preface	<i>ix</i>
1. Introduction	3
2. The Backdrop	8
3. Strategic Power and Nuclear War	21
4. Strategic Power and Deterrence	46
5. Strategic Power and Communist Behavior	74
6. Strategy, Strategic Power, and Alliance Relations	105
7. Arms Control and Strategic Power	134
8. Power and Security in the Nuclear Age	169
Appendix Tables	179
Notes	185
Glossary	201
Index	211

Tables

Text Tables

1. United States and Soviet Intercontinental Strategic Strike Forces	10	
2. Soviet Intercontinental Strategic Strike Forces, Circa 1975	11	
3. Chinese Communist Strategic Strike Forces, Circa 1975	12	
4. United States Intercontinental Strategic Strike Forces, Circa 1975	13	
5. Comparison of U.S. and Soviet Strategic Nuclear Capabilities, Circa 1975		26
6. Hypothetical U.S. and Soviet Force Postures, Circa 1975	44	
7. Hypothetical U.S. and Soviet Force Postures Under Arms Control, Circa 1975		145
8. Comparative Effectiveness of Two Hypothetical Missile Payloads	150	

Appendix Tables *following 179*

1. United States Intercontinental Strategic Strike Forces, End of 1970
2. Soviet Intercontinental Strategic Strike Forces, End of 1970
3. Other Soviet Strategic Strike Forces, End of 1970

4. Selected U.S. Strategic
Defensive Forces, End of 1970
5. Selected Soviet Strategic
Defensive Forces, End of 1970

STRATEGIC POWER AND NATIONAL SECURITY

1

Introduction

As the Bible says, "There is a time for everything under the heavens," and this is a time for change. Although most calls for change have sounded on the domestic stage, they have also echoed in the foreign arena. Prominent Senators have demanded cuts in U.S. forces stationed overseas and have sought to impose new constraints on economic and military aid to American allies. Leading Congressmen have questioned the need for additional weapons systems; powerful mayors, the rationale for ongoing defense programs; and people from all fields and all walks of life, the balance between expenditures for national security and those for domestic well-being. Nor has the clamor gone unheard in the executive branch: President Nixon has cut down troop strength in Vietnam, has reduced the military budget, has announced changes in the defense policy formulated by the previous administration, and has initiated comprehensive studies which could induce further alterations in U.S. strategic concepts, force postures, and defense expenditures.

The impetus to the revisions already made and to the reexamination still under way came not only from awareness of a shift in public attitudes, not only from the natural tendency of an incoming President to assert his own views on military matters, but also from new factors in the politico-military environment. One such factor is a significant increase in Soviet strategic forces, with the USSR for the first time surpassing the United States in numbers of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).¹ A related

factor is that innovations in weaponry make it theoretically possible for the USSR to destroy in place large numbers of American bombers and ICBMs, even as they enable the United States to multiply its own retaliatory capabilities through the introduction of MIRVs (multiple independently-targetable reentry vehicles) or to defend them through the deployment of antiballistic missiles (ABMs). Thus the recent—and continuing—changes in U.S. and Soviet strategic nuclear forces alone would make desirable a reassessment of programs for the future.

These are not, however, the only factors contributing to such a reassessment; the United States must also bear in mind that Communist China will develop a significant nuclear capability within the next decade. Even comparatively small forces might enhance China's prestige, increase its freedom of action, and pose problems for the United States should there be another confrontation in the Far East. And while the Chinese, beset by internal difficulties and embroiled with the USSR in both doctrinal and territorial disputes, are unlikely to challenge directly American interests or to threaten American allies, this does not rule out the necessity for considering the effectiveness—and the desirability—of measures to cope with Communist China's strategic strike forces.

This is even more true with respect to measures aimed at the USSR, which is at one and the same time a threat to and a partner of the United States. Even as it has built up its strategic strike forces, the Soviet Union has expressed willingness to consider limitations on such forces; even as it has introduced naval vessels into the eastern Mediterranean, it has cooperated with the United States in avoiding confrontations between its ships and those of the American Sixth Fleet. The desire of the Soviet leaders to avoid nuclear war, or conflicts likely to lead to war, has induced both caution in the exercise of their own military power and collaboration in efforts to restrain the use of force by others—as in the guarantees against nuclear aggression issued by the United States, the USSR, and the United Kingdom. Thus any review of strategic programs must take into account the impact on U.S.-Soviet relations of doing too much as well as the possible consequences of doing too little.

Another factor affecting the review is that of relations with America's allies, which have been thrown into some disarray by the growth and extension of Soviet power, by U.S. efforts to deal with the USSR, and by the political and military consequences of the war in Vietnam. To the extent that the allies are still fearful of Communist pressures, the United States must consider how to offer reassurance and support—hopefully without stimulating counteractions on the part of the USSR and Communist China. To the extent that the allies are worried over the potential consequences of a U.S.-Soviet *détente*, the United States must recognize that this limits the range and nature of agreements with the USSR on the reduction of armaments. And to the extent that Vietnam has absorbed American attention and resources, the United States is constrained in what it can do, either politically or militarily, to implement measures acceptable to the allies—if indeed any set of measures could gain universal allied acceptance.

This is equally a problem at home, where there is increasing opposition to the extent and scope of American commitments, to the forces and programs required to uphold them, and to the massive expenditures needed to support those forces. Partly because this is “the winter of our discontent,” the Congress and the public have been participating in the review of military policies and programs to a far greater extent than on previous occasions. For this reason, among others, it is believed that a timely analysis of defense policies may be helpful in fixing the pattern for the next decade.

Obviously, any thorough analysis should cover the whole spectrum of U.S. defense policy, from that governing limited nuclear war in NATO to that dealing with assisting threatened allies to build more stable—and more responsive—governments. But such an analysis, which would involve consideration not only of military but of foreign policy, and not only of policy but of complex and costly programs, is perhaps too much for a single work. Moreover, many aspects of overall defense policy depend on decisions with respect to the size and the composition of strategic nuclear forces, that is, with respect to levels of strategic power. Just as the concept of massive retaliation shaped the force postures and the programs of the fifties, so concepts adopted today may shape

those of the seventies—perhaps to an even greater extent. Hence, this study will focus primarily on the contributions of U.S. strategic nuclear forces to the achievement of relevant U.S. objectives—in other words, on strategic power and national security.

Even within this restricted context, however, a number of important and difficult questions must be answered:

1. Are strategic forces in the seventies to have uses other than that of deterring a nuclear attack on the United States? Should they, for example, be designed to *fight* nuclear wars? And should they also be relied upon to deter local aggression, or is their task simply to prevent the escalation of any conflicts involving the United States and another nuclear power?

2. What is likely to be the impact on Communist behavior of a shift in the strategic balance? * Is it true, as one eminent Sovietologist has suggested, that, if the USSR achieved even strategic parity, it might “be tempted to undertake a more extensive, more acute, and more dangerous range of risks in order to pursue its declared, long range ambition to reshape the world according to its own dogma”?² And are U.S. ballistic missile defenses necessary to preclude an “irrational” Communist China from initiating nuclear war during a crisis or a local confrontation with American troops?

3. To what extent can U.S. strategic nuclear forces instill a sense of security in America’s allies? Does this depend on the size, the nature, and the capabilities of these forces or on other factors, such as the extent to which the allies have a voice in decisions on their use? Is even this enough, or will more and more countries attempt to safeguard their interests by building their own nuclear forces?

* Even though the Communists are not the only ones who cause problems for the United States, and even though in the long run the United States may face new and different opponents, the emphasis on *Communist* behavior in this question, and in the book as a whole, is warranted on two bases: (1) at the moment, U.S. defense policies and programs are oriented primarily toward coping with the threats to American interests posed by the Communist countries; and (2) two of these, the USSR and Communist China, possess nuclear weapons, and hence must be given “top billing” in any analysis of the requirements for, and the uses of, American strategic power.

4. To what extent may American procurement of new weapons systems—which Indian Ambassador V. C. Trivedi characterized as “vertical [nuclear] proliferation”—make control over nuclear weapons more difficult?³ To what extent does this stimulate similar procurement by other countries? And if the United States wishes, in agreement with the USSR, to stop the arms race, what kinds of arrangements would both achieve this aim and enable this country to maintain adequate and effective strategic nuclear forces?

The answers to these questions—if they are in fact answerable—depend in part upon an evaluation of military and technical factors, such as the thrust and the accuracy of intercontinental ballistic missiles or the effectiveness of the over-the-horizon radar. But they depend in even larger measure upon an assessment of less tangible and more subjective elements. For instance, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird has argued that the Chinese Communists, because of their predominantly rural society and their willingness to take great losses of life, might not be deterred by American strategic offensive forces.⁴ If correct, this estimate could warrant the deployment of BMDs (ballistic missile defenses), but if erroneous it could have serious adverse consequences, among them that of stimulating the arms race. Thus views concerning the nature of deterrence, opinions as to probable Communist behavior, assessments of allied interest, and estimates of responses to shifts in American defense programs must all be considered, along with more largely military factors, in attempting to answer the questions posed earlier.

In subsequent chapters, I will first discuss the military-technical factors which affect the size and the composition of U.S. strategic nuclear forces; next I will talk about the political and psychological impacts of different levels of strategic power; and, finally, I will try to assess their implications for national security and national well-being. Admittedly, the coverage will be partial rather than complete and broad rather than detailed; not even the Pentagon, in a multivolume series, could do justice to every aspect of the problem. Hopefully, however, what is written here will suffice to illuminate alternatives and to provoke discussion of the issues, which is all that any author can ask.

2

The Backdrop

The Threat

For the past twenty years the United States has maintained strategic nuclear forces superior in size, in delivery capabilities, and in flexibility of response to those of the USSR; indeed, the rapid U.S. buildup of land- and sea-based missiles in the early 1960s gave it long-range strategic strike forces three or four times as large as those of the Soviet Union. Any hope, however, that the USSR might rest content with powerful but inferior strategic nuclear forces seems shattered by the events of the last few years. Between 1965 and 1970 the Soviet Union quintupled the number of ICBMs deployed and almost tripled its force of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), many of the additions being longer-range missiles on larger and quieter submarines. It has improved its antisubmarine warfare capabilities by building specialized escort vessels, by launching new attack submarines, and by commissioning two helicopter carriers—the first the USSR has ever had. It has strengthened its air defenses by the installation of both long-range, high-altitude surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and the shorter-range but more flexible SAM-3, of which so much has been heard from the Middle East. Moreover, the Soviets not only have emplaced antiballistic missiles around Moscow but have pushed the development of advanced interceptors and of improved radar for ballistic missile defenses; in consequence, they could, as Secretary of Defense Laird testified, deploy “a