

NEW PREFACE FOR PAPERBACK EDITION OF
STRATEGY IN THE MISSILE AGE

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The occasion of putting this book into a new paperback edition reminds one that some time has elapsed since the original publication, and that in the field of modern strategy time tends to deal severely with concepts as well as facts. On the whole this book has fared very well, but five years nevertheless warrant a statement about what one would do differently if one were writing the book today. I am indeed pleased that in the present instance such a statement need be neither long nor involved.

The fact that five years have elapsed is less important than that the date of publication preceded the coming to power of the Kennedy and subsequently the Johnson administrations, which have pursued an ideology in defense matters markedly different from that which infused the previous administration. Actually, speaking in a descriptive rather than a causative sense, this book as originally published in 1959 turned out to be a projection of the

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intellectual structure within which the defense doctrines and distinctive military postures of the Kennedy administration were to take shape. I might also say that though that structure, as represented in the book, was not by any means solely my own creation, I had nevertheless made some contributions to it, chiefly in the area of thought about limited war.

I mention this mainly to put into some perspective my later criticisms of certain administration defense policies that seemed superficially to be entirely in line with ideas advocated in the original volume. For example, my article "What Price Conventional Capabilities in Europe?" published in the May 23, 1963 issue of The Reporter, systematically criticized what I held to be excessive devotion to the idea of resisting possible Soviet aggression in Europe mostly by conventional means -- though I had apparently advocated comparable ideas in my Chapter 9.

One relevant fact and partial explanation is that when the book was written (some parts of it were first composed long before 1959), those sections that deal with limited war, and especially with conventional capabilities for fighting a limited war, had to be advanced against much intellectual opposition. Actually, my own writings, then classified, urging that more study and resources be devoted to limited-war capabilities date from the beginning of 1952 (when I first heard of the thermonuclear weapon to be tested in the following November), and at that time the views I was expressing met in some quarters not only opposition but amazed disbelief. It is difficult to recall now that at that time it was a completely accepted axiom --

despite the ongoing Korean experience, which was regarded as entirely aberrational -- that all modern war must be total war. This idea had been by no means completely dissipated at the time of the publication of the book in 1959.

In that respect the situation today is vastly different. The present frame of mind on relevant issues within the defense community of the United States would make unnecessary today the tone of advocacy sometimes manifested in the book. On the contrary, if it were being written today it would be more appropriate to point out (as I tried to do in the above-mentioned article and in other papers) the limitations and drawbacks attending possible over-emphasis of what is basically a good and necessary idea.

What other changes in circumstance are worth noting for this new edition? So far as concerns changes in the world of things rather than ideas, far the most important in the five years since publication has been the revolution in the degree of security built into the strategic retaliatory forces of the two major nuclear powers, especially those of the United States. I did indeed stress in the book the importance of such a change, which was then already beginning, but the degree to which it has in fact taken place has outrun my expectations. Our Secretary of Defense, Mr. Robert S. McNamara, and other members of the Kennedy-Johnson regime, were quick to recognize the importance of this vulnerability problem and to push programs designed to cope with it. Among the most important of these have been the Navy's Polaris submarine and the Air Force's Minuteman missile programs. The former puts

under water and the latter under ground in hardened silos the intermediate and the long range missiles of which the major part of our retaliatory capability is already or soon will be composed. Thus, in time of crisis, which may in fact include actual hostilities with our major opponent, the pressure for "going first" with our strategic forces is not only reduced but well-nigh eliminated. This change introduces immeasurably more stability into any crisis situation -- a fact somewhat intriguingly reflected in the term "crisis management" that has lately made its way into the fashionable jargon of the times. Or, to use another term that has come into wide use of late, "escalation" to general war is far less to be feared from any commitment to limited war than was formerly the case -- even, I would hold, if nuclear weapons should be used.

An interesting concomitant of the change I have just described has been the development of an obvious dilemma with respect to targetting for general war -- a dilemma that was also anticipated in the book, on pages 289-94. Where both sides have large retaliatory forces of relatively low vulnerability, attack upon enemy cities looks more than ever unattractive. On the other hand, the likely accomplishments of a "counterforce strategy" become also relatively unpromising. This dilemma contributes to diminishing the incentives for going first in a strategic exchange. One is both less worried about the vulnerability of one's retaliatory forces and also less eager to get on with a not-too-promising target list. This new or developing situation is not without its special problems; certainly the utility of the "massive retaliation" threat against local aggression has diminished even further (if it is not

already at zero), but the situation is nevertheless, in the net, far more salubrious and comforting than was the case in 1959.

One should not omit mention also of the revelations attendant upon the great Cuban crisis of October 1962 and its most successful resolution for the United States. What looked in the beginning like an extraordinarily bold and venturesome act on the part of the Soviet leaders turned out in its conclusion and its aftermath to underline the degree to which those leaders were determined to avoid hostilities with the United States -- perhaps due in part to the fact that they were less given than our own leaders to distinguishing between local and general war and less ready to think of the possibility of keeping the former from graduating into the latter. At any rate, the conduct of the Soviet Union since that time concerning such trouble spots as Berlin has reflected a so much better perception of us and what we will tolerate or not tolerate that we have some reason for expecting that their relatively conciliatory policies will survive the replacement of Mr. Khrushchev by others in October 1964. Certainly, the consequences thus far of this historic confrontation seem to have been from our point of view entirely salutary.

Against the above described changes, those involving developments in active anti-missile defenses are of quite modest importance. Though everyone agrees that producing a highly effective anti-missile missile defense would be of the first order of strategic importance, no sophisticated worker in the field has any expectation of such a thing occurring in the foreseeable future. There is indeed a considerable consensus that technological development in

this area should be pursued and that significant though strictly relative gains are to be expected from doing so. But nobody expects anything like an impenetrable umbrella of anti-missile defenses to be erected over our cities or our own missile emplacements -- certainly not within any meaningful time span -- and no one expects the opponent to do significantly better. It is the old story of ingenuity in defense having to reckon with ingenuity in offense, with the latter having a large margin of the advantages.

The principle of civil defense has indeed made almost no progress since the publication of the book. Any reasoned exposition of the advantages of putting very modest proportions of our entire defense resources on developing such capabilities is likely to engender in this country impassioned outbursts of opposition. The reason seems mainly to be that while offensive missiles and devices for their protection promise to deter war, fallout shelters and the like appear to have minimum utility for deterrence and are urged mostly for the sake of saving lives if general war does in fact occur. It is not really surprising that many people derive an additional sense of security from attacking what could be of use only if the unthinkable happens.

I suppose also that the considerable orientation of the book towards developing the historical origins of contemporary situations has had as much to do as my lucky guesses concerning the future in explaining the relatively small degree of obsolescence imposed by five years of time, during which events seemed to be moving so rapidly. At any rate, it is possible for me to envisage with great pleasure and minimal misgivings the reissue of this volume

in a paperback edition. I should like also to express at this time my gratitude for the extremely favorable reception accorded the original edition and its several reprintings both in the United States and abroad.