Second-Area Operations

A Strategy Option

Robert Perry, Mark A. Lorell, Kevin N. Lewis

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PREFACE

American defense analysts have recently displayed new interest in a strategic option that invokes a potential for conducting nonnuclear, limited-objective operations in areas remote from the central theaters currently of greatest concern to the United States—Europe and Southwest Asia. This study examines the conceptual and historical antecedents of that approach and provides an assessment of the range of costs and benefits, and risks and advantages, of a strategy that includes second-area operations as one of its principal options.

The research reported here has been conducted under the general sponsorship of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy as part of a larger Rand project titled *Patterns of Conflict.*

This research and its findings should be of interest to the community of defense analysts, particularly those concerned with the study of alternatives to large-scale war.

SUMMARY

This study addresses the proposition that the United States should be prepared both to counter and, if advisable, to exploit a strategy that involves military actions in areas of the world apart from the central theater of a war or major power confrontation. The main issue is to what extent and under what conditions an investment in such military actions constitutes a useful strategy. Because such an approach has, as one of its objectives, avoidance of escalation, the inquiry concerns only conventional (nonnuclear) conflicts.

Among many possibilities, second-area actions could be either multiple and simultaneous or singular, could be either initiative or responsive, could occur during a conflict or during its prelude, and could be elements in a strategy of maneuver (threat and counterthreat, thrust and counterthrust), or extensions of a central collision between major power blocs. Although this report explores all of those possibilities to some extent, the emphasis is on the potential utility of such a strategy to the United States in its continuing competition with the Soviet Union.

Most wars in which the United States has been engaged involved in one respect or another conflict in two or more geographically separate regions, but the United States has traditionally paid homage to the policy of concentrating on one theater at a time. The nominal principle has been to avoid peripheral engagements and major involvement in arenas not obviously important to the central arena. Since 1945 this country has become involved in a succession of crises that were neither global nor isolated. Defense planners have therefore begun to consider the need for a global policy perspective on nonnuclear conflicts.

The term "second-area conflict" is used here to characterize actions associated with the projection of forces to areas separate from central and more vital areas of conflict or confrontation. The underlying principle is to strike at an opponent's vulnerabilities without exposing oneself to an unacceptably harsh counterstroke. The nature of such actions, and their risks, penalties, and benefits, must also be considered.

A varied set of historical examples is available to illuminate three main categories of second-area operations and various sub-categories of motivation, rationale, or justification. In recent centuries, second-area operations have been intended to influence the central outcome of a conflict, divert an opponent, and secure specific advantages or purely

local objectives. Under the "war winning" heading fall such rationales as defeating or preempting secondary opponents and acquiring intrinsically valuable assets. Coercion, acquiring bargaining chips, diverting enemy forces, and imposing attrition on an opponent are diversionary or peripheral goals. Local or deliberately constrained actions might be undertaken for morale reasons, for local tactical effect, or as a means of utilizing underemployed resources.

The historical record recommends prudence in deciding how and where to apply a deliberate strategy that invokes second-area actions. Careful planning is an insufficient (if essential) precondition for success. Nor is vulnerability a sufficient occasion for approving such undertakings: The absence of obvious risk does not warrant future gain.

The problem of planning for such a strategy is that it must have more than theoretical attractions: Implementation can be costly, whether the necessary specialized forces are created by reorganization or by building from scratch. Moreover, implementation must take full and careful account of the inherent uncertainties of outcome associated with peripheral operations. It is not apparent that one can win a major conflict by way of second-area operations, but it is clear that one can lose a great deal if they fail.

The viability of a second-area operations strategy may depend on the probability of engendering an "appropriate" response, preparations and implementation, an apt evaluation of conceivable outcomes, the ability to ensure that an opponent understands what is being attempted (and what is not), and ensuring that any specific operation, whether peripheral or central, represents the best use of limited military assets. The possibility that a central and vital national objective may be victimized by investment in secondary actions probably constitutes the weightiest potential argument *against* both the strategy in general and any specific proposed operation.

All this may seem obvious, but in this century many nations have undertaken second-area operations of one sort or another without systematically evaluating alternative outcomes, without preparing thoroughly, and without assessing the benefits of otherwise using the required resources or the consequences of dissipating them. It is not that these evaluations, however difficult, would so delay an operation as to put it at risk, but rather that the policy decisions and the operational activities are not appropriately integrated. The reverse of the coin is that nations subjected to second-area attacks have often exploited major flaws in the attacker's planning, preparation, or execution, frequently to the initiator's considerable distress. In that circumstance lies the explanation for the allied failure in the Dardanelles

in 1915, the resounding successes of the Germans in the 1941 Balkans campaign, and the critical victories of the British over the Italians in Africa only months earlier. Although in one sense all three campaigns appear to illustrate failures in efforts to exploit second-area options, the Balkan victory in 1941 was in fact a planned German initiative briefly disrupted by brave but unwise Yugoslav and British moves; and the British in Africa skillfully exploited an opportunity to act against an injudicious foe at slight risk and with the prospect of great gain.

Even when there is sound evidence that one can establish and maintain local force superiority in areas of second-area operations, major risks come with the strategy. One first-order danger, certainly more important today than before the general introduction of nuclear weapons, is that the target of the action will misunderstand its nature and escalate the general level of violence. Evoking a nuclear response to an action at the level of the Grenada operation would be most undesirable, for instance. The second important risk is that resources required to support a second-area operation could be used to much better purpose elsewhere, or that their commitment to such actions might create windows of opportunity elsewhere that an alert opponent would exploit. Thus, in the context of a global confrontation, a strategy that to any extent depends for success on the deliberate use of second-area operations should include reasonable confidence that the gains sought, whether tangible or intangible, are likely to outweigh the costs of the action. One's own costs are easier to calculate and regulate than gains. A classic example is the American raid on Tokyo in 1942, which (barring grave misadventure) could have cost no more than a handful of B-25 aircraft and their crews. The expected gain was mostly moral; in the event, Japanese grand strategy was recast in reaction to the raid (by redefining the defended perimeter in the Pacific to include Hawaii), with the eventual consequence that the Japanese were defeated at Midway and never thereafter regained the initiative they needed to force concessions from the Americans in the negotiated peace settlement they hoped for. It is possible to look on that sequence of events in terms of poker strategies: The Americans observed table-stakes rules, which prevented them from raising the stakes, win or lose, and limited their potential losses; the Japanese elected to invest all their reserves as well as a considerable share of forces committed elsewhere to the gamble that they could take Midway (and later Hawaii), which had not been in their original agenda. They neglected to calculate the consequences of a failed campaign, which included the loss of four vitally needed aircraft carriers.

From the perspective of a defense planner, the central aspect of a strategy involving second-area operations is uncertainty, first of the

outcome of any specific operation (that is typical of most military actions, of course) but second, and much more important, of the consequences for the central balance of forces. To escape from a situation dominated by the risks of nuclear war or large-scale nonnuclear general war may require at least partial commitment to a strategy that invokes more but different uncertainties than those arising in classical deterrent strategies or central front wars. Developing general rules for handling them will be difficult.

The crucial problem is how best to evaluate the costs and benefits of trading one set of problems for a different but not necessarily less troublesome set. Any such calculation must take account of the possibility of denuding central forces of essential capabilities and the many different costs and consequences of creating and maintaining the kinds of specialized forces required for most second-area operations. The proven quality of tactical command and logistic resupply assurances are vital considerations. Both the local and the central command must continually reassess the long-term potential for gain and loss and must be prepared either to enlarge forces or withdraw them as the situation warrants. Finally, unless the objectives of the initiator are effectively communicated to an opponent, a catastrophic escalation could result.

Apart from traditional analytical efforts, scenarios constitute a potentially useful means of exploring the concept. Four basic scenarios have particular appeal:

1. starting from a peacetime crisis,
2. starting from a supposition of a threatened general war,
3. proceeding from a situation of a stalemated central conflict, and
4. starting as one side has obtained an advantage that frees forces for noncentral operations.

Although in principle a careful, adroit, skillfully managed strategy of second-area operations may appear to be more appropriate for the United States today than continuation of the strategic policies shaped by the experience of total war, the extent to which that premise has a practical application in a world of nuclear missiles remains to be established.

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM

Conventional wisdom says that a collision between Soviet and U.S. forces is most likely to occur in either Central Europe or Southwest Asia. In both areas, the Russians (and their surrogates) could exploit their possession of interior lines and their numerical advantages in men and machines. The Soviets (and the Russian Empire before them) have invariably sought such advantage in past wars.

One way around that difficulty would be for the United States to challenge its opposition in areas where Soviet capabilities to deliver and support substantial forces, particularly under combat conditions, would be severely strained. The Americans have had to fight on remote battlefields in every major conflict they have engaged in for more than a century. In areas distant from the Soviet heartland the Americans would presumably be able to exploit their superior strategic mobility, derived in part from their more advanced military technology. The Americans might also benefit from their experience (and doctrine) of successfully supporting complex systems in remote areas, whereas the Soviet tradition has been to rely on the industrial facilities of their homeland for refurbishment and repair services.

Regardless of whether the Soviets and the Americans were confronting one another or one another's allies in an area remote from both homelands, both sides could ultimately depend for their sustenance in any extended conflict on air, sea, or unsecured overland supply channels. The dependence of one's potential opponent on extended lines of communication and supply is one criterion for identifying potentially exploitable military options. It is a criterion that applies to possible collisions between U.S. and Soviet forces, between either superpower and an ally of the other, or in some conceivable circumstances between the opposed allies of the two superpowers.[1] But it is necessary also to consider broader definitions and other criteria.

The main emphasis of this study is second-area military actions, distinct and usually remote from military operations (or pre-conflict con-

[1]An isolated conflict between major *European* allies of the superpowers seems an unlikely event: The North Atlantic Treaty and the Warsaw Pact essentially commit their various signators to come to one another's military assistance in the event of conflict between any of the opposed states. Exceptions to that generalization would extend to a war between India and either China or Pakistan (neither is formally allied with either superpower) and a war between Israel and Syria (aligned but not allied).

frontation)[2] in a primary conflict zone, but ranging from pre-conflict maneuver to a large-scale "peripheral" operation in an ongoing war. The basic assumption here is that for every collision of interests between the superpowers there is a central dispute, prime concern, or principal theater of confrontation.

The theme of Soviet-American differences since 1945 has been the balance of power in Europe. Although the precise balance may shift as time passes, for the purposes of examining the attributes of second-area conflict or a strategy of second-area operations it will be postulated that a rough equivalence of force characterizes the central region, and that neither side can acquire a preponderance of military force sufficient to support a perception of certain victory.

That concept does not foreclose the possibility that some second-area conflict could escalate and in so doing become the new central concern of both powers. Such a transformation is far from inconceivable. To recall a popular scenario, a Soviet invasion of Iran and the introduction of an American force into the southern part of that country, followed by a major buildup of forces on both sides, could make Iran a new central theater and one of the NATO or Warsaw Pact flank states a candidate target for some new lateral move by either side. Concurrently, either the Soviets or the Americans could elect to exploit intervention opportunities in (for example) Korea, Libya, Angola, South Vietnam, or Syria. The point is that several confrontations or conflicts could occur simultaneously, and almost any perceived opportunity to secure an advantage could become the occasion for a second-area action.

As the terminology is used here, therefore, a *second-area operations strategy will be assumed to involve the selective application of potentially dominant forces in a localized effort to secure gains that outweigh the immediate costs and other unfavorable consequences of the action.* Actions pursuant to such goals will tend to be distinguishable from normally predictable central-area actions by their locale or by the obviousness of their limited objectives and will customarily be conducted by forces at least temporarily dedicated to that action alone.

A fundamental question is to what extent fairly small-scale, multi-front campaigns can effectively be substituted for and influence the balance in central theater confrontations and to what extent second-area operations can augment or enhance the achievement of primary national goals without simultaneously detracting from the national

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[2]By which is implied the crisis-period opposition of mobilized and alerted military forces in a region that both superpowers would view as a primary theater were war to follow. A threatened Warsaw Pact occupation of West Berlin attended by NATO and Warsaw Pact mobilization seems a sufficient example.

capability to succeed in some designated central theater. Such questions are not academic in the sense of abstract strategic concepts; the issue for the United States is whether such departures from doctrine or policy (but not necessarily from tradition) improve or diminish the ultimate probability of deterring Soviet adventurism or, if deterrence fails, of foiling Soviet objectives.

It is not unreasonable to treat any major military expedition or action outside the primary conflict zone in a war or pre-conflict confrontation as a second-area operation. But perceptions of "primary conflict zone" will differ from country to country and situation to situation. During World War II, for instance, the President and senior U.S. military officials held the primary conflict zone in Europe to be Western Germany and its approaches; for the Soviet Union, *every* area except that where Russian armies met German armies was a secondary theater. When, for one reason or another, no active primary conflict area existed (as when the British had been expelled from the continent during the Napoleonic Wars and again in 1940), all appreciable military actions become "second-area" operations. After May of 1940, Churchill and much of the Imperial General Staff came to favor making the Mediterranean rather than Western Europe the "primary theater." For General MacArthur, the primary theater of World War II was the South Pacific; for Admiral Nimitz, it was the seas adjoining the island approach to Japan.

A deliberate investment in second-area operations during either a crisis or a superpower conflict has on occasion been characterized as horizontal escalation or, in a similar context, as a war widening strategy. Both imply a heightened level of violence, and to many the term escalation is of itself frightening.[3]

From the perspective of a defense planner, the critical element of a strategy of second-area operations is uncertainty. Sidestepping the risks of central war by undertaking a series of second-area operations may require making commitments that involve greater (if different) uncertainties than those arising in classical deterrent strategies or central front wars. The main problem is how to evaluate the costs and

[3]"Horizontal escalation" has occasionally been nominated as a desirable strategy alternative to "vertical escalation," which many strategists believe will be the inevitable consequence of actual conflict involving major Soviet and American forces and which most commentators agree would lead to an exchange of nuclear weapons. By inference, then, the desired outcome of a decision to undertake second-area military operations should not provoke an escalatory response; were some second-area operation likely to bring on an unwanted or unanticipated escalation from conventional to nuclear warfare, prudence would recommend either that the second-area action be forgone or that a nuclear operation be substituted, to exploit whatever presumed advantage the first use of nuclear weapons conferred.

benefits of trading one set of problems for a different but not necessarily more welcome set. A first move in that calculation is to evaluate the possibility and the consequences of denuding central forces of essential capabilities in the process of creating and maintaining the specialized forces required for diverse second-area operations. Logistic and resupply considerations obviously enter into such assessments, as does the possibility that as an operation unfolds its initiator will be forced to decide whether to enlarge his initially committed forces or withdraw them. Potentially serious political consequences can attend the latter, and major strategic effects the former. Finally, the likelihood and consequences of an escalatory response must be assessed.

It does not necessarily follow, of course, that such assessments are clear-cut or that consequences are inevitable. Those who criticized the Dardanelles campaign of 1914–1915 often did so on the grounds that the half million allied troops committed to the Eastern Mediterranean could have been much more usefully employed on the Western Front. In fact, their absence probably kept Sir John French from expending them uselessly in meat-grinder assaults on German trench lines, which in 1915 absorbed nearly 300,000 British casualties without bending.

Several fundamental questions are associated with proposals to adopt a national strategy embracing second-area operations.

1. In what circumstances should one originate second-area operations?
2. What national risks are associated with investing in second-area operations, either as a principal strategy or as a major option?
3. Would the returns from adopting a second-area operations policy confer benefits that offset the financial costs and force structure consequences of creating the military capability to make it feasible?

Unequivocal answers are unlikely, not only because so many intangibles characterize the problem but also because objective analysis is difficult. It is often assumed that the concept of a strategy of exploiting second-area military actions runs counter to conventional policies derived from past American experience, particularly from the events of World War II and the subsequent era of great power nuclear confrontation. Classical military theory insists that concentration of force associated with absolute local superiority in both numbers and quality of equipment is the essential and unfailing key to success in warfare; history, represented by such commanders as Cromwell, Marlborough, Napoleon, Jackson, and Rommel (among many), takes frequent exception to the rule.

Although honored more often in the breach than the observance, formal U.S. policy since the Civil War has been to concentrate the main effort on a single theater in any multi-front conflict, to defeat the principal opponent while merely holding off any others.[4] But, in fact, the United States has fought single-theater wars only since World War II (in Korea and in Southeast Asia); in every other war, some powerful political or military faction has invariably clamored for and usually been successful in securing the allocation of very substantial assets and efforts to some theater other than that officially characterized as "primary." Examples include efforts to annex Canada in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 (although to many Americans in 1812, Canada was the *only* area of any consequence); the three separate campaigns of the Mexican War (along the border with Texas, in central Mexico, and in the far west); the Virginia theater and the western campaigns of the Civil War; the separate Caribbean and Asian adventures of 1898; and the Mediterranean, German, and Pacific theaters of World War II.

Although World War I seems to be an exception, Pershing's resistance to reinforcing attenuated French and British armies and his insistence on creating an "American Front" along the trench lines in the West persisted until an allied defeat seemed imminent in the spring of 1918. Throughout World War II the MacArthur faction in the Army (and the Congress) opposed both the Roosevelt-Marshall global strategy that gave priority to the war against Germany and the Nimitz strategy for the Pacific that called for assaulting Japan's vulnerable Central-Pacific island barrier. Eisenhower and Marshall were unsuccessful in their efforts to concentrate all forces for a major invasion of Europe in 1943; the British succeeded in inducing American involvement in two Mediterranean campaigns, and almost until the Normandy invasion had started continued to argue for attacking through the Balkans. Observance of the doctrine (or convention) of one primary theater was further weakened in the post-1945 era as the United States became involved in a succession of crises that were neither global nor isolated, and most of which concerned areas distant from the NATO central region where the great bulk of overseas American forces were concentrated.

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[4]The perfect illustration is General Marshall's 1942 recommendation to President Roosevelt that unless the British abandoned their opposition to an early invasion of France "we should . . . assume a defensive attitude against Germany, except for air operations, and use all available means in the Pacific" (B. H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War*, Putnam, New York, 1970, p. 312). Lincoln's transfer of Grant to the Eastern theater in the fall of 1863 testified to his conviction that the Civil War could be won or lost only in Virginia. Similarly, Pershing and Wilson placidly accepted the French view that the only conceivable place for American troops was along the trench lines of the Western Front, although neither seems to have had much confidence that the British or French had the will or the skill to defeat the Germans.

Military analysts differ in almost all respects in their appraisals of the benefits and defects of such exo-central military campaigns (which are rarely attributed to any coherent strategic plan). There have, of course, been efforts to create a capability to win "one and a half" wars (or two and a half), and some force structure concepts have accommodated a nominal "go anywhere" global capability for U.S. forces. Thus planning for naval and strategic nuclear forces has consistently been based on a conceptually "seamless," unified, global theater.[5] But for most of the recent past, key general-purpose force planning decisions have derived from specific, geographically oriented scenarios.

A commitment to "the main target" has continued to characterize national strategic planning, even though theory and practice are usually at variance. Nevertheless, the primacy of NATO in U.S. planning for its General Purpose Forces, the tradition of slow U.S. responses to noncanonical contingencies, and the chronic inability of major U.S. adversaries to project forces much beyond their own frontiers have impeded efforts to reconcile the single- and the multi-theater approaches to defense planning. However, during the 1970s the USSR exercised a degree of strategic mobility, occasionally used proxies skillfully, and consolidated a two-hemisphere base structure. While the Soviets were acquiring the ability to project forces into areas once viewed as the private preserves of the Western powers, U.S. defense responsibilities were being forcibly expanded by the withdrawal (or expulsion) of "friendly" forces from remote areas (in Africa, Southwest Asia, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East) of great strategic interest to American governments. Recent political trends (and continuing technological progress) have underscored the possibility that sudden, unpredictable outbreaks of violence may occur anywhere on the globe; they have also demonstrated the readiness of the Soviets to exploit any opportunity to expand their own military influence at Western expense. And it is not evident that U.S. defense investments during the 1970s were, in quantity or kind, sufficient to support U.S. global commitments.

In consequence, some U.S. defense planners have begun to consider the need for a global perspective on potential nonnuclear conflicts in areas remote from the "central theaters" where major conventional forces have been concentrated since the 1950s. It is not obvious that either persistent or transient inferiority in a given locale should necessarily oblige the United States to rely solely on threats of nuclear escalation, central theater actions, or gradual mobilization as responses to

[5]See William W. Kaufmann, *Planning Conventional Forces, 1950–1980*, Brookings Institution, 1982.

challenges from the Soviet Union. An alternative might be to manipulate global military resources and options so as to enhance deterrence and simultaneously improve the prospect of military prevalence in areas distant from the European cockpit. If responses to a major challenge include the strategic nuclear response as one potential option and a nonnuclear or controlled nuclear response in Europe as the principal alternative, the value of having other choices becomes readily apparent. There are two obvious capability options: the ability to operate effectively against attractive second-area targets, those located outside the nominal central theater of actual or anticipated operations; and the ability to project force advantageously *on occasions when no central military decision is pending*, when thrust and counterthrust are the accepted processes of confrontation, and when—for sufficient reason—maneuver is preferable to massive frontal engagement. Possessing such capabilities, the United States would be able to take whatever prompt military action was needed to prevail in a localized conflict or to secure valuable political, economic, or military assets even if obliged to operate in a region where U.S. forces were not normally present or where they had not explicitly prepared to function.

The ability to conduct effective operations in such circumstances could be vital if the continuing competition between the United States and the Soviet Union were to proceed in accordance with the principles of constrained force application and limited objectives that have characterized international conflict in the West during most of the previous five centuries, rather than in imitation of the total war, total victory concepts that marked the enormously destructive world wars of the 20th century. The ability to defeat an opponent without destroying him (and by the process endangering one's own society as well as that of the opponent) has been the hallmark of successful military strategy for millennia. Applying it to the conditions of the late 20th century is no small challenge.

II. SETTINGS AND RESOURCES

The enlargement of a conflict to geographically remote areas, to include new modes of engagement or by involving additional participants, has historically been one approach to achieving grand strategic objectives. Given the opportunity, most nations have attempted to generate remote threats that would imbalance or somehow injure a nearby opponent. Blockades and embargoes serve a similar purpose. Other stratagems for dividing enemy coalitions—threatening to open second (or third) fronts, seizing dispersed enemy assets, attacking second tier enemy forces (or nominally neutral but potentially hostile forces), or upsetting an enemy's economy or morale—come readily to mind.

But quite apart from the fact of historical example, modern strategic conditions may have created requirements for new and rigorous approaches to such traditional means. National destruction could be the first consequence of major misjudgment; winning small engagements and settling for limited gains may constitute not only the most feasible but also the most promising avenue for exercising strategic superiority. Afghanistan is an example. It follows, of course, that one must take special pains to ensure that his opponent appreciates the moderate character of gains sought and the limited nature of goals pursued through such a strategy. There is no great advantage to securing some major prize at slight cost if the deprived opponent responds by substantially raising the level of violence or retaliates in some otherwise undesirable way.

Modern conflict situations tend to develop quickly. If not quite instantaneous, communication can be quite rapid, as can the destruction of any definable target, anywhere. As the British have again demonstrated in the Falklands campaign, remoteness is no barrier to force projection. Both the United States and the Soviet Union have global interests and the capabilities to exercise their forces worldwide. Still, the rationale for and the effectiveness of force projection hinge on the rapidity, the scope, and the content of the military initiative and the response.

The concept of making second-area military operations a major element of national strategy arises from a fundamental observation: Viewing the military balance between the superpowers as *a phenomenon with global scope* illuminates opportunities for improving one's strategic position by striking at noncentral enemy vulnerabilities,

either in response to some aggressive move or as an initiative intended to preempt or constrain an emerging crisis. Although the geographical implications of such an option are obvious, the methods and the approach are its essential features, and the use of strategic surprise or the exploitation of unorthodox tactical means potentially regains attractiveness.

Excursive responses to challenges may be of particular interest in the event of confrontations between East and West in regions adjacent to the Soviet homeland, where extended lines of communication and resupply place the United States at a disadvantage. Defense Secretaries Harold Brown and Casper Weinberger have explicitly considered the proposition that U.S. counteractions to some hostile Soviet move might be directed against points of Soviet vulnerability in parts of the globe outside the primary arena of Soviet aggression.[1] And although conventional wisdom has it that the Soviet Union lacks the experience and the doctrinal flexibility to undertake and carry out large and complex operations in regions distant from their homeland, it would be imprudent to ignore the prospect of a change in that situation or the possibility that a latent and undemonstrated Soviet capability exists. Indeed, recent developments (Cuba, Syria, Ethiopia, Afghanistan) support the proposition that Soviet forces and their proxies are now able to function effectively at the ends of lengthy logistic lines.

The concept of second-area operations has received sporadic attention recently,[2] and its feasibility has been examined in the context of a few specific scenarios, but its bases have not been explored in much detail. This report attempts to lay out some of the principles that might govern investment in such a strategy, as well as other strategies that treat deliberately invoked local conflicts as elements in a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States that need not necessarily provoke general war. The question being examined is when (or whether) taking military action in some region of the world that is peripheral to the primary theater or crisis area could constitute a useful strategy for either the United States or the Soviet Union. To proceed requires first examining definitional problems associated with the concept, and second reviewing the substantial historical record of previous uses of such a strategy. The product should be categorical lessons about the effectiveness of such strategies over a range of circumstances. From a review of the prerequisites and assumptions that

[1]See C. Weinberger, *Annual Defense Report for FY83,* Washington, D.C., 1982.

[2]Frequently under the somewhat misleading rubric, "horizontal escalation," which to most critics implies major force projection on a global scale as well as a heightened level of violence. Those are optional rather than essential elements of the second-area operations strategy being addressed here.

determine and underlie the concept can be derived some general observations concerning the risks of and the preconditions for successful exploitation of a global defense strategy that includes lateral excursions among its options.

Analysis of the second-area operations concept cannot proceed far without some reasonable understanding of what the concept actually entails and how it might be employed. Analysts should be able to distinguish its critical elements from other, more familiar modes of conflict, although that is no easy assignment. True, the sample scenarios often used by proponents of such a strategy make the notion of second-area excursions seem intuitively clear. For instance, responding to the intrusion of locally superior Soviet ground forces in Iran by using dominant U.S. naval and air resources to attack Soviet interests elsewhere, say Cuba or Libya, is a familiar concept. But in practice it is very difficult to construct a broadly satisfactory definition of second-area operations, much less to explain the logic for deciding what makes some specific lateral move useful and others frivolous or even dangerous. The utility criterion implies that a deliberate second-area move should confer realistic benefits large enough to offset any consequences in the central area of conflict or confrontation. Gains conceivably could range from intrinsically valuable assets through means of compelling military or economic or political concessions to a favorable alteration of the global military balance.

One may postulate, then, that *a second-area operations strategy involves the application of military force in a setting where the initiator enjoys relative superiority, with the intention of worsening an opponent's global circumstances, and under conditions in which either there is no opportunity for successful central-theater action or such action carries with it unacceptable risks or costs.*

But this definition creates its own serious problems. The most important of these relates to the scope of a superpower conflict, given possibly different perceptions of the issues involved. It is unclear whether either participant will be able to establish (and act on the knowledge) that at some specific level of investment a secondary objective either is no longer relevant to or is unlikely to influence the achievement of primary military or diplomatic objectives. Alternatively, will policymakers always appreciate that their opponents may see a deadly threat in some action they view as useful but peripheral? These are critical distinctions. If a second-area "gain" has no intrinsic value and cannot influence an opponent's behavior, its cost, however slight, is likely to be excessive. If the action precipitates an unwanted escalation in the ongoing level of violence, local gains are most unlikely to balance out the net costs.

The determinants of each side's perceptions of gains and losses, of values, and of the consequences of specific second-area actions will be extremely hard to assess in advance. But it is essential to make appropriate allowances for all of the central conditions that distort "perceptions" of a conflict situation. What is appropriate at the time will almost certainly depend on the situation, just as "appropriateness" will in large measure be determined by expectations of the reaction.

Having struggled through the thickets of initial concept and definition, one is obliged to address, however briefly, questions of means. It is quite true that in preparing for or conducting war, the United States has seldom been thwarted by a lack of materiel resources. Even during the four years of total industrial commitment during World War II, the American civilian economy functioned at a level of abundance that most other warring nations envied at a distance for years after the war had ended. But peacetime political realities constrain defense expenditures, and notwithstanding shifts of emphasis as one national administration replaces another, deciding what military goods shall be purchased, and in what quantity, remains a matter of apportioning shortages.

Creating a national capability to support a second-area operations strategy requires either drawing from existing military resources or providing means to finance the acquisition, manning, and support of new forces. In the event, in the United States some combination of those measures probably would be adopted, with greater early emphasis on restructuring than on creating new forces from scratch; budgetary constraints and acquisition schedules would condition preferences. Assumptions about the nature, frequency, scope, and intensity of the military activities likely to follow the adoption of a second-area operations strategy will dominate decisions on the composition of new (or newly designated) forces. In the absence of the guidance provided by detailed force structure analyses, war games, force exercises, and the other contributors to force procurement processes, it is not reasonable to attempt to specify preferences. But certain presumptions about composition may be stated if they follow from definitions of a lateral escalation strategy. One very obvious attribute of eligible forces is strategic mobility; force projection capability is likely to be a determinant of the outcomes of conflicts or impending conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union for the balance of this century. Indeed, *perceptions* of capability will probably drive some decisions on how to manage a crisis or confrontation.

If one of the attributes of a second-area operations strategy is the ability to act militarily in regions distant from some central arena of conflict, it then becomes necessary to assign or earmark forces to that

mission. As those familiar with the complexities of the U.S. SIOP (Single Integrated Operational Plan) will testify, the feasibility of conducting "limited operations" has traditionally been contested by those who believe that *any* diversion of committed resources will reduce the probability of achieving minimum U.S. aims in such a conflict. Arguments about the desirable size and composition of a national strategic reserve force usually ground on a similar reef. A capability for nonnuclear lateral operations will cause certain major resources to be withheld or drawn from the General Purpose Forces, which are oriented toward a NATO contingency; the nature of the resources designed for a second-area operations strategy may undesirably affect the chosen forces, making them (for example) so specialized as to become unsuitable for other assignments.

One of the ground rules of this study is that the conflict situations being analyzed should not extend to the use of nuclear weapons. Although that proscription does not preclude consideration of dual-capable systems or of assigning second-order nuclear weapons missions to designated "conventional" forces (or task forces) intended to enhance out-of-area capabilities, it may influence the composition of such forces. They are unlikely to include strategic bombers, for example, although it is entirely conceivable that strategic bombers might be given special and limited assignments in support of second-area task forces. The use of B-52s for sea control operations, the establishment of SAC's "Strategic Projection Force" to support the U.S. Central Command (rapid deployment force), and the use of Vulcans in the Falklands are recent examples.

Capabilities for out-of-area excursions will undoubtedly be built around nuclei of naval carrier task forces. Not only is that logical in light of the comparative naval strengths of the United States and the Soviet Union, but it exploits a U.S. advantage in firepower, mobility, and flexibility the Soviets cannot hope to rival during the remainder of this century. Another advantage of sea basing is its independence from the political complications that often arise through relationships with the populations and local governments of overseas land bases.

A principal underlying premise of this report is that, at their onset, second-area actions will not ordinarily involve large conventional ground force formations. Airborne, amphibious, and special forces will be essential ingredients of any strike group intended to occupy and hold territory. The current emphasis on increasing vehicle survival of U.S. Army mechanized and armor divisions may also imply the acquisition of lightweight equipment for special units. But the conventional belief that "light" mechanized forces will be swept away by standard "heavy" armored formations and the possibility that lightweight task

forces may encounter "heavy" Soviet units also oblige analysts to consider how to transport, deploy, and support "heavy" forces.

The prospect of sending U.S. forces to remote areas of the world makes it advisable to consider if the composition of such forces must be decided when the force projection decision is made. Ordinary prudence suggests the advisability of being able to assemble task forces to suit the occasion and to alter that structure with changing circumstances. Again, the Falklands campaign supports that observation.

None of this should be taken to imply that the concept of force projection by way of a second-area operations strategy is either obvious or obviously infeasible. But it is important to acknowledge the difficulty of conceptually developing, much less applying, a strategy appropriate to a free-form analysis in which neither the specifics nor the variables can be precisely identified in advance. Better understanding of basics is essential.

III. SECOND-AREA ACTIONS: THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Embattled nations have often attacked their opponents in areas remote from the original area of dispute in efforts to break a stalemate, avoid a high-risk frontal engagement, cope with a disadvantageous military balance, secure a peripheral advantage, exploit a transient opportunity, or divert or distract an opponent at some critical time. Although some commentators view the concept as innovative or even unique, it has both hoary antecedents and a mixed record of success. The period of history reviewed here spans most of the modern era, roughly from the late 17th century to the present. The list of conflict situations chosen as examples is merely illustrative. Although it would be desirable to limit examinations of second-area actions to the plane of grand strategy rather than campaign strategy or tactics, that is not entirely feasible, first because the distinction is often blurred and second because a tactical diversion has sometimes developed into a major confrontation. (The battle over Guadalcanal is a case in point.) All the examples cited here involve conflict situations rather than pre-conflict crisis escalation. The motivations for historical actions are nearly always multidimensional, difficult to ascertain, and open to interpretation.[1]

Three broad categories of second-area actions can be defined in terms of both intention and effect. The first includes those out-of-area activities intended to affect the military balance in a central theater. It need not be massive (the Dardanelles assault in 1915, for example, was conceived as a quick and cheap operation) and it can be a feint (as was the Japanese invasion of the Aleutians in 1942).

A second category includes all those activities intended to influence hostile decisionmakers without necessarily affecting the overall military balance or the course of the principal dispute. Rather, they are designed to deter or foreclose some potential opposing action, to coerce opponents or unfriendly noncombatants, to alter the nature or composition of an alliance (friendly or hostile), or in some other manner to exert influence (or even some degree of control) on the decisions of an opponent. The initiator's usual intention is to affect outcomes over the

[1]The historical assessments presented are our own, although most reflect the views of leading military historians. Widely divergent views are more common than not, new material and new interpretations are frequent, and different categorizations of particular incidents may occur.

long term rather than to secure some immediate decisive outcome. German intervention in the Balkans in the spring of 1942 falls into that category; the most the German leadership initially hoped for was to strengthen their south flank and to prevent the immediate collapse of their Italian allies.

The third category of actions includes those intended neither to alter the central military balance nor to influence an enemy's decision processes in any important way, but that are undertaken for what an earlier generation would have called "meaner motives." It includes activities intended to affect morale, obtain temporal gain, or otherwise make a flashy show at a time when some more substantive action would be imprudent or excessively costly. The German "little blitz" against London in 1941, the Doolittle raid of 1942, and the seizure of German colonies in late 1914 fall into that category. Self-delusion about the importance of such an action or its potential consequences may also motivate activities that in retrospect are relegated to this class; their instigators may well have perceived them originally as "category two" in nature.

Each of those principal categories can be subdivided in various ways. The object of such an exercise in taxonomy is to provide a framework for examining and evaluating the discrete sub-elements of a strategy that too often in the past has been disparagingly treated and misleadingly called "horizontal escalation." In general, risk is proportional to expected return; the expectation of large benefits is the customary excuse for risking much. Matters of goal, consequence, and primary effect are very important.

Table 1 displays the topical headings under which are organized the several theses, each illustrated in examples that follow. The first two general categories treat of the *means* by which a major power might, by indirection, attempt to influence the outcome of a central area conflict or seek to gain advantage or weaken an opponent's negotiating position. In those cases, the goals are implicit. The third category treats more directly of the *goals or purposes* of pursuing specific tactical objectives.

Judgments expressed here about the comparative success or failure of individual efforts are chiefly based on whether the implied or perceived goals were satisfied and on the costs and consequences of the action. Sometimes the eventual consequences of some local or limited action were far more important than its immediate effects and much larger than had been foreseen.

Table 1

TAXONOMY OF A SECOND-AREA STRATEGY

I. *Attempts To Influence the Outcome of a Central-Area Conflict*

- A. Opening of a major second front
- B. Preemptive attacks on new opponents
- C. Efforts to defeat secondary opponents or dissolve alliances
- D. Actions designed to attract new allies or solidify alliances

II. *Efforts To Improve a Negotiating Position*

- A. Coercion of neutrals or potential foes
- B. Major feints
- C. Seizures of:
  - 1. Bargaining chips
  - 2. Intrinsically valuable assets
  - 3. Assets of great potential value to an enemy

III. *Efforts To Achieve Specific Tactical Objectives*

- A. Morale enhancement
- B. Local area gains
- C. Utilization of idle assets
- D. Defeat of an exposed force

ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF A CENTRAL-AREA CONFLICT

Opening of a Major Second Front

The Allied invasion of Italy in 1943, which succeeded in pinning down substantial German forces and which drove the Italian monarchical state out of the war, must be accounted at least a limited success. There is less to be said about earlier Allied actions in the Mediterranean. The Americans, at least, did not view the Allied invasion of North Africa a year earlier as a serious effort to affect the central course of the war, and in the end they were right. British efforts to open a second front in the Eastern Mediterranean in 1914–1915, first by a sudden assault on the Dardanelles and later by a large expedition to Salonika, were either ultimate failures or dismal successes. Hitler may have believed that "the Allied Balkan Army" had materially contributed to the defeat of the Central Powers in 1918,[2] and Churchill agreed, but few shared their view.

[2]See B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, Praeger, New York, 1962, p. 132.

The Dardanelles experience, from start to finish, shows that an operation begun for sensible, rather narrow purposes could with the passage of time accumulate a variety of goals and have a range of unanticipated consequences. Churchill originally proposed a low-risk effort to seize the passageway between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas, which would have permitted easy resupply of Czarist Russia. But once the operation began, the "second-front" concept gained adherents; the effort became the core of a major attempt to seize control of the Dardanelles, which was in the contemporary British scheme of things comparable in value to Gibraltar, Suez, or Singapore.

Gallipoli thus became the centerpiece of an effort to defeat a secondary opponent (Turkey) and to solidify an alliance (by succoring the Russians). It expanded into a maneuver designed to attract new allies (Greece and Romania); it was an effort to acquire a postwar bargaining chip (Constantinople would have fallen had the assault succeeded). It was for a time viewed as a major feint that would draw German troops away from the European front; it was intended to raise allied morale, at a low ebb after the first winter of fighting in France; and it was a device for exploiting "idle" assets (several old battleships deemed unfit for service against the main German fleet, and two divisions of unblooded Australian and New Zealand troops stationed in Egypt).

It achieved none of those objectives (except as it used up several obsolete battleships and blooded the Anzacs), ultimately contributing to the defeat of Russia, the ruin of Greece, the occupation of Romania, the revitalization of the Turkish army, and the fall of the Liberal government in England, as well as generating hundreds of thousands of allied casualties at no cost to the Germans, who sent fewer than 100 officers to assist the Turks. In the end, T. E. Lawrence's romanticized war in the desert and General Allenby's "on the cheap" attack on the Ottoman Empire from Egypt proved to be far more effective "second-front" operations in the Middle East, drawing away troops that could have been used against the Russians and Greeks.

Preemptive Attacks on New Opponents

German assault on Yugoslavia in 1941 was a classic success both strategically and tactically, not only in removing a potential threat to the south flank of the pending assault on the Soviet Union, but also in rescuing a beleaguered ally (Italy). But there is another side to the coin: In 1916 the Romanians perceived in recent reverses to the fortunes of the Central Powers an opportunity for seizing Austro-Hungarian territory, and joined the allies. The forecast of easy success proved terribly wrong; six months later German troops occupied all

important Romanian territory and for the remainder of the war turned its output to their ends.

Efforts To Defeat Secondary Opponents or Dissolve Alliances

The 1941 British expedition to Greece was chiefly intended to drive Italy out of the war. It had perverse consequences of several sorts, but in missing its chief goal and in inflicting grave harm on the long term British war effort, it must be accounted an unqualified failure.[3] A much more successful effort was the British campaign in the Baltic in 1803; it cost Napoleon his northern allies and brought Russia into opposition to his aims.

Actions Designed To Attract New Allies or Solidify Alliances

Making the best of a difficult situation, two German cruisers caught in the Mediterranean at the start of the war in August 1914 evaded the Royal Navy and, after inflicting minor but spectacular damage to allied shipping along the way, succeeded in reaching Turkish waters. Scarcely days earlier, the British had embargoed delivery of two completed battleships ordered (and paid for) by the Turks, who still were neutral. The Germans transferred ownership of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* to the Turks (the ships kept their German operators in Turkish uniforms), moved them into the Black Sea, and attacked Russian installations there (without a Turkish declaration of war). After rejecting allied protests, Turkey formally entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. The cost to the Germans was two cruisers and crews that otherwise would have been lost or, at best, interned for the duration of the war.

A counter example is the allied landing in Salonika in 1915 in an effort to bring Greece and Romania into the war. Although in a literal sense the effort eventually succeeded, it opened a new and costly front that the allies had to support (Greek enthusiasm for the war was subdued), the Romanians were overrun, and allied troops were sent against Bulgarian troops instead of the Germans who were supposed to have been lured into the engagements. In the end, the expedition brought about the overturn of the Greek government it had sought to strengthen.

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[3]The promptness and effectiveness of the German response was in part the consequence of their having prepared earlier to "pacify" the Balkans before embarking on their invasion of Russia. Thus German armies were more or less in place, a factor the British seem not to have considered when deciding whether to send forces to Greece.

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE A NEGOTIATING POSITION

Coercion of Neutrals or Potential Foes

In April 1801, Admiral Nelson forced his way into the harbor at Copenhagen and inflicted grave damage on the Danish fleet at anchor there, although Britain and Denmark were at peace. His object was to cause Denmark, and by indirection, Sweden, to refrain from joining Russia in a contemplated assault on the British blockade of Northern Europe, then subservient to Napoleon. The effort was a spectacular success, coercing not merely the Danes but also the Swedes and ultimately the Russians, who had no stomach for a naval war against England.

A far less auspicious outcome marked the Soviet attempt to coerce Finland in 1939–1940, in what became the Winter War. Although they eventually smashed through Finnish defenses, Soviet forces were militarily discredited (which further encouraged German plans to attack the Soviet Union in 1941); the serious losses of winter troops and materiel (and major morale problems) inhibited the Soviet defense of Leningrad the following year; and on the occasion of the German attack on Russia in June 1941, the Finns eagerly joined in, with considerable effect.

Major Feints

Although the Russians looked with relish on the possibility of seizing German territory in East Prussia at the start of World War I, in their prewar planning neither Russians nor Germans viewed East Prussia as a potentially decisive theater of conflict. Austria was the traditional foe of Russia; the Czar and the Kaiser were companionable autocrats. The German staff planned a lightly manned holding operation in the East while the French were disposed of, after which, in company with Austrians freed from the conquest of Serbia, they expected to turn to the defeat of the Czar's armies along the center sector of the Eastern Front. But convinced by the French that it was essential to draw off German armies from the initial assault on France, the Russians agreed to a large-scale invasion of German territory in the north as a first step in the war. Although militarily inept in every way, the feint succeeded; a German army corps that conceivably could have turned the corner at the Marne was withdrawn to reinforce a largely intact German army in Prussia, and although the Russians suffered crushing losses the maneuver kept the French in the war.

In 1942 the Japanese sent a substantial striking force against the Aleutian Islands in hopes of drawing off American forces from the

Central Pacific. The feint failed, owing largely to American intelligence operations and the strategic sense Admiral Nimitz displayed; in the end the Japanese carrier aircraft diverted to the Aleutians represented the only reserve the main Japanese fleet could call on after losing four carriers to American bombers, and the Japanese were defeated in the Battle of Midway.

Seizures of Bargaining Chips

The allied (and Japanese) seizure of German colonies in 1914 was clearly intended, at the time, to provide bargaining chips for later negotiations, although the intensity of emotions generated in the war closed out that possibility later. Had the Germans won, they would probably not have been obliged to exchange any important gain in Europe for lost holdings in the Pacific. If Brest-Litovsk and Versailles are representative examples, the victors in such total wars demand what they want and negotiate nothing.

Less intense 18th century wars between France and Britain were replete with colonial seizures and with the subsequent negotiated return of many such prizes.

Another unsuccessful chip-grab attempt was the French military occupation of Fashoda in 1896, an effort to secure a trans-African belt of French or French-dominated territory that cut across lands the British had to control if they were to complete their Cape to Cairo rail link. It nearly caused war with England (the British actually constructed coastal fortifications along the Channel), and it delayed for several years the informal agreement that led to the Triple Entente, extending for that period the grave danger of a German attack on a diplomatically isolated France. The French withdrew from Fashoda in the face of British military force and secured no concessions in return.

Attempts To Acquire or Secure Important Assets

A second use of second-area campaigns as a peripheral strategy involves securing assets coveted for their own sake, independent and under cover of the primary conflict. As in the case of acquiring bargaining chips, the opening of the new front is rarely seen as a means of affecting military opportunities or balances on the primary front. But obtaining exclusive access to scarce resources (Swiss machinery, Swedish steel) pays two kinds of dividends, and in a global conflict certain important bases (Singapore, Gibraltar, Suez, Iceland) can have high intrinsic worth.

With its growing naval preponderance, Britain skillfully enlarged its network of overseas stations and strengthened its economic bastions throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1713) was a decisive effort by Britain to foil Louis XIV's bid for European hegemony. The French and British recognized the importance of controlling the European shore of the English Channel and the great North Sea ports. William III and Marlborough appreciated the peripheral nature of naval and colonial warfare; France had to be defeated on the continent. But Marlborough, who was English, not Dutch, and more Whig than Tory, saw more clearly than William the necessity of striking the French wherever they could be hurt instead of concentrating on protecting the dynastic interests of the House of Orange. And although Marlborough and his foes assembled some of the largest armies seen in Europe since the invasions of the Huns and the Turks, they were nonetheless limited in their operations by logistic considerations: If large armies did not continually move about or have access to barge- or ship-borne supplies, they could not be fed.

Not content to conduct the traditional campaign of maneuver and siege while avoiding battle, Marlborough attacked the French frontally whenever the opportunity offered and also encouraged (and dispatched forces to support) allied campaigns against the French-Spanish coalition in Italy and Spain, along the upper Rhine, and on the Mediterranean coast (attempting on one occasion to seize Toulon). Possession of Gibraltar and a semi-permanent alliance with Portugal were among the lasting gains; the abatement of the threat of French control of the Netherlands was the central outcome. Along the way, the British crown and parliament also extended their clear authority over Ireland and Scotland, acquired additional large portions of North America, and reduced Spain to second rank as a world power. In total, the peripheral benefits and consequences proved to be considerably more important and more lasting to Britain than the negotiated central settlement.

Analogy is always risky; nevertheless, that is a beguiling sequence of events.

Throughout the remainder of the 18th century, Britain continued a policy of controlling the seas and chipping away at its opponents' colonial peripheries while France, Austria, and Prussia mauled one another on the continent. The great mid-century wars (1739–1756) were marked by military operations from North America and the Caribbean to India. French expansionist ambitions in Europe were again checked, Prussia emerged as a great power, and England assembled its first overseas empire, gaining most of North America and achieving a commanding position in the Caribbean and India.

The strategy continued throughout most of the two decades of war with revolutionary and Napoleonic France (1792–1814), during which Britain attacked and acquired Malta, the Ionian Islands, Heligoland, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Tobago, Mauritius, the Cape, Ceylon, the remainder of India, and the Pacific Northwest. Eventually the armies of Russia, Prussia, Austria, and Britain combined to defeat Napoleon in the west, and, although the Russian campaign is accorded most of the credit for the French downfall, Wellington's Spanish campaign played no small part.

The United States experienced a similar, if much briefer and cheaper, species of colonial expansion at the close of the 19th century. Expansionist sentiment grew substantially in the United States throughout the late 1800s, but the Congress stayed Grant's Caribbean ambitions, and public clamor was not enough to force military action on such cautious presidents as Harrison and Cleveland. It took war with Spain over Cuba in 1898 to provide the impetus. The only issue openly in dispute was the status of Cuba; with the destruction of the *Maine* in Havana harbor, the United States dispatched a fleet to the Caribbean and landed 16,000 troops at Santiago. Before dashing off to lead the Rough Riders up San Juan Hill, Teddy Roosevelt, who had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy, exploited the opportunity to ensure an assault on Spain's possessions in the Pacific. The centerpiece of this effort was Commander Dewey's attack on the feeble Spanish fleet anchored in Manila harbor. (Only one of the antiquated Spanish cruisers exceeded 1000 tons.) From a military standpoint, occupying Spanish holdings in the Pacific was quite irrelevant to earlier events in Cuba, but it was the only war the United States had, and the opportunity to seize a way station adjacent to China was too tempting to forgo. The Spanish War led to U.S. dominion over the Philippines and Guam. (Spain also relinquished Puerto Rico, and almost as an afterthought Congress was emboldened to annex the Hawaiian Islands.)

Such excursions generated bonus side effects from confrontations at least nominally concerned with more central issues. The overriding objective of Britain's wars with France in the 18th and early 19th centuries was to prevent French domination of the Low Countries, which housed the only effective competition to British mercantilism as well as the outlets of the most important water routes to the great inland markets of Northern Europe. Britain's national well-being depended on keeping these territories independent of the French. But the British also acted on the principle that their national well-being could not be diminished while they controlled the seas and the trade routes on which, ultimately, European prosperity depended. It is an interesting

commentary on British grand strategy that English troops contributed little to central-front European conflicts between 1713 and 1914. (At Waterloo, Wellington commanded an allied army in which British contingents were a decided minority.) British leaders from Marlborough to Castlereagh were agreed that although major efforts had to be made in centrally important areas, peripheral gains had great influence in negotiated settlements. Secured from invasion by its fleet, Britain chiefly indulged in side-area conflict for its long-term bonus effects, partly because mercantilism held that colonial possessions were vital to national interests.

In a like manner, the United States in 1898, enjoying overwhelming naval superiority and unaware that 19th century imperialism was dying, could attack Spanish forces in the Pacific and take control of valuable territory confident that the United States would easily prevail in the Caribbean and knowing that Rear Admiral Montojo's Pacific fleet posed no threat to U.S. intervention forces in Cuba. But both British and U.S. expansionists recognized the central importance of such strategic sites as Pearl Harbor, Manila, Gibraltar, Malta, Ascension Island, and Singapore. In an age of sea power, whether its exercise depended on sail or on coal, such peripherals were vital rather than incidental.

The German invasion of Norway in 1940 ensured continued Nazi access to critical Swedish ore supplies and foreclosed the Allied effort to shut down that traffic. Napoleon's unsuccessful effort to seize and hold Egypt and the Syrian littoral in 1798 cost the French potential control of the Mediterranean. Since 1704, Gibraltar has been British, but possession has recurrently been contested by the Spanish, French, Austrians, and (by proxy) Germans; Gibraltar is precisely the sort of territorial asset that has encouraged investment in second-area operations. The Soviet invasion of northern Iran in 1942 represents one of the few clear cases of Soviet second-area operations of this nature, although in a sense the complete Soviet Far East campaign in August 1945 was aimed at seizing unsecured Japanese territory.

Efforts To Prevent Opponents from Securing Vital Assets

Haiti and Louisiana were viewed similarly by Napoleon, who squandered a fleet and an army in the effort to repossess the first and in 1803 sold the latter for a pittance to preclude a British takeover upon renewal of hostilities. A more successful effort to prevent an enemy from gaining possession of vital assets was the British attack on the French fleet at Mers-el-Kebir in 1940. Although costly in diplomatic terms and perhaps unnecessary (given the later refusal of French crews

at Toulon to surrender their ships after the Germans occupied that port), that action ensured British control of the Atlantic until the American Navy came into action.

EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE SPECIFIC TACTICAL OBJECTIVES

The class of lateral actions undertaken for slight, sometimes almost frivolous reasons has on occasion had major effects on the course or outcome of a war. The effects experienced were not always (or even often) those anticipated when the effort was set afoot. Further, misinterpretation of events and effects from time to time induced subsequent excursions or investments that did not have the hoped-for favorable effect. On balance, the most "successful" of the lateral actions undertaken in pursuance of local or limited goals were those that required only small forces for which there was no better immediate use and that, if lost, would not have much affected the balance of forces. British attacks in East Africa and at Taranto, the Doolittle Tokyo raid, and the German use of paratroops in the Netherlands in 1940 perfectly fit that requirement. The V-2 offensive, the Italians' African campaign of 1940, and the initial uses of tanks and poison gas on the Western Front are instances of imprudent investment of resources that, if husbanded, might have been influential another day or in another place.

Morale Enhancement

Raising morale, either in armed forces or among distressed home front civilians, has been a major concern of belligerents for all of this century. (Napoleon understood the tactic a century earlier.) Few military actions have admittedly been undertaken to that end, but some have every appearance of raising morale as a chief object.

The 16-aircraft Tokyo raid of April 1942 was an example. Like many such ventures, it bore strange fruit. Every American bomber was lost, as were one-sixth of the crew members, and damage to the targets was negligible. But American morale received a much needed fillip (nine days earlier Bataan had surrendered), and the Japanese recalled four Army fighter groups to augment home defenses, all of which went to the credit side of the strategic balance sheet. However, the Japanese also seized Chekiang Province to preclude the use of its airfields for future attacks on the home islands (the American B-25s had been intended to operate from such airfields after landing in China), permanently foreclosing such options. Finally, even though the attack had

been tactically ineffective and a repetition was all but inconceivable, the appearance of such a threat impelled the Japanese to attempt to extend their defensive perimeter once more rather than shift to a defensive posture, as they had planned to do while consolidating their gains in the South Pacific. The renewed Japanese expansion drive brought on the battles of the Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal, which in combination reversed the initial course of the war in the Pacific. In that context, the Tokyo raid could be viewed as an American tactical disaster (Doolittle expected to be court-martialed) that became a strategic triumph with consequences rivaling those of Trafalgar: In both instances the stricken opponent responded to peripheral setbacks by embarking on a calamitous expansion effort that overstressed his resources and enlarged his vulnerability.

The German V-2 offensive of 1944 was at least partly motivated by hopes of improving German morale (although the Germans never publicly conceded that), but it cost enormously more in lost arms production than its results warranted and it had no perceptible morale effect; day and night bombing of Germany was of greater consequence, both militarily and with respect to civilian productivity.[4] The Dieppe raid of 1942 was intended at least as much for morale as for military effect, but through bad management it became a costly failure and, although the British concealed the extent of their losses, they probably were detrimental to British morale.

Local Area Gains

The British torpedo bomber attack on Taranto in 1940 was in many respects a minor affair, but it caused the Italians to withdraw the bulk of their fleet to less exposed anchorages and opened much of the Eastern Mediterranean to British sea traffic. At the cost of only five *Swordfish* aircraft, the British put three battleships out of action. Coincidentally and inadvertently, they also demonstrated to the Japanese the feasibility of conducting torpedo bomber operations in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor; the Japanese later modified their torpedos in the fashion the British had pioneered.

Another side of the local-area-gains coin was the Italian effort to occupy East Africa after entering the war in 1940. Greatly outnumbering their ill-equipped British opponents, the Italians expected to sweep up untended bits of empire on the cheap. Their miscalculation of comparative troop quality and tactical ingenuity cost them Eritrea and

[4]The Anglo-American strategic bombing campaign of 1942–1945 was in fact a second-area action, although Allied air strategists saw it as a "second front" that in its own right could bring on the economic collapse and the military defeat of Germany.

Ethiopia as well as the last shreds of their military reputation, all of which contributed to their later loss of North Africa to troops partly drawn from the East African region.

Utilization of Idle Assets

Nations recurrently indulge in peripheral actions that plainly are not intended to alter the central military balance in hopes of obtaining some effect from forces that are not needed and cannot be gainfully used in the central zone of conflict. That has, in fact, been the most common justification for such excursions in the past. Typically, the British high command assigned Indian, Australian, New Zealand, and to some extent African troops to the Middle East in World War I and to North and East Africa 25 years later. In both instances they were given locally important assignments that, initially at least, were not expected to affect the central progress of the war.

The dispatch of B-29s to China in 1944 was similarly justified; the aircraft were not wanted or needed in Europe, and for the moment the United States had access to no other airfields within flying range of the Japanese home islands. The resultant raids had some morale consequences for both sides, but whether the eventual outcome improved the strategic position of the Allied forces in the Pacific theater remains debatable. The Japanese responded to the appearance of B-29s in China by expanding their zone of occupation, easily defeating numerically superior Chinese nationalist forces and nullifying not only the immediate American effort but the carefully ordered strategy that underlay it. Fortunately, the U.S. Navy was able to seize suitable airfield sites in the Marianas; and in late 1944 the B-29s commenced bombing operations against Japan from those more advantageous locations. But side effects were to make China a backwater theater, to weaken the Nationalist Government, and to strengthen Japanese control of central China. The cost to the Japanese was negligible, scarcely more than large-scale field exercises.

Even the Russians have succumbed to such temptations. Initially impelled by Peter the Great, they built and maintained quite large naval forces in the Baltic and contested control of the Black Sea with Turkish ships, but they rarely ventured much past the exits to those narrow seas. In the long Napoleonic wars, however, a substantial Russian fleet (46 sail, including nine ships of the line) operated in the Eastern Mediterranean, at first in league with the British. The vagaries of Russian foreign policy, consistent only in its predatory theme, ultimately prompted a new Franco-Russian alliance; and in lieu of any other application, the Russians renewed their recurrent efforts

to seize the Dardanelles and to secure control of the exit from the Black Sea. Nothing much was accomplished by either side; the Mediterranean remained the British duck pond Nelson had made it, and in time the Russians departed empty-handed.

The Anglo-French expedition to Norway, planned for early 1940 but preempted by the Germans, was another case of seeking a use for what were perceived to be underutilized military assets: French and British troops settled behind the Maginot Line during the 1939–1940 "phoney war." (At one point in early 1940, the British and French seriously planned to dispatch idle troops to fight against the Russians and beside the Finns, as if Germany were insufficiently challenging.) Although their presence probably would have altered nothing in the end, the Allied forces inserted into Norway in April 1940 (mostly because they had been assembled for another purpose) were desperately wanted in France by May of that year.

Defeat of Exposed Enemy Force

The most successful riposte of this sort in recent history was the German attack on Crete in 1941; one of the least successful was the costly and extended, if ultimately victorious, British effort to expel German forces from East Africa in 1915–1916. Japanese attacks on Burma and their carrier assaults on Ceylon were of this nature too. The Burma campaign was quite successful in the short term, although at great cost the British eventually recovered their lost territory; but the attack on Ceylon was a mixed bag in that it drew needed carrier forces from essential operations in the South Pacific and (later) off Midway. MacArthur's decision to bypass isolated Japanese garrisons in the South Pacific in 1944 and 1945 was an interesting instance of opting not to use such a strategy.

In some instances, the evident weakness or apparent tactical vulnerability of an opponent has seduced a nation's leaders, as most recently in the Falklands. The grotesquely ineffective 1940 Italian campaign against outnumbered British East African forces equipped with 20-year-old artillery, ancient armored cars, and antique aircraft is an example. After pushing off the initial Italian assault, the British obtained quite modest reinforcements and counterattacked. In the following weeks, the British took 250,000 prisoners and destroyed one-fourth of the Italian tactical air force, securing their first substantial victory of the war along the way.

REPRISE

History fortifies theory in the observation that second-area operations undertaken in the expectation of winning wars, altering central force balances, or controlling the outcomes of major central confrontations have little to recommend them. Even when they were nominally successful, as in the Allied invasion of Italy in 1943 or the German assault on the Balkans in 1941, they rarely had their intended long-term effects. When military assets or alliances were targets, as in the numerous British and French maneuvers in the Levant in 1914–1917, the outcomes seldom seemed to warrant the investment, and the second-order costs almost invariably were greater than expected. That appears to flow from the chronic tendency to underestimate the resources needed for such enterprises. In the abstract, a good case can usually be made *against* withdrawing and using elsewhere assets that are "excess" to central force needs. But to the political masters of war, using those assets to batter through a central-front stalemate may appear too costly, too risky. That is what makes peripheral operations attractive. Such dilemmas of choice continually confronted the Allies in both World Wars; that peripheral alternatives were unattractive to them in 1917 and 1918 goes far to explain why the Germans invested in ultimately futile assaults on Western trench lines, leading to the subsequent exhaustion and defeat of German arms.

The most obvious means of profiting from the use of a second-area strategy is to induce or oblige one's opponent in a stalemated, closely matched central-front conflict to divert important assets to another arena. That motive underlay the Soviet clamor for a second front in the West from 1942 onward. Churchill's favorite strategic concepts in both 1914 and 1942–1944 envisioned diversion and dispersal of German strength. If neither the Dardanelles operation of 1915 nor the Allied African and Italian campaigns of 1942–1943 had their intended effect, it is more a reflection on the way they were conducted than on flaws of concept. As much can be said for the Union campaigns in Virginia in 1862–1864, before Grant's arrival, although Grant's eventual (and very costly) victories in Virginia owed more to Sherman's successes in the west than to the brilliance of his own generalship.

That major second-area operations intended to win wars by indirection become attractive when the central area is stalemated is as important to Europe in the late years of the 20th century as it was in the 18th. But the skillful conduct of such operations is at least as important as the elegance of their concept. Had someone with the vision and determination of a Churchill or a Kitchener been in command at the start of the Dardanelles campaign, it might well have been recorded

as a strategic and tactical triumph equal to that of Sherman in Georgia 50 years earlier. The risk was much smaller in 1914 and the rewards—keeping the Russians well supplied—at least as large. The Dardanelles represents one case in which a lack of boldness in execution canceled out the splendor of the plan.

The pursuit of diversionary or peripheral goals has proved most thoroughly beneficial when the potential risks, costs, and gains are accurately assessed, are proportional to one another, and are fairly small. When the assessments are inaccurate, outcomes tend to depart radically from expectations, which is to say no more than that skillful assessment of costs and benefits is the first and most critical task of a strategist. Thereafter, when forces have been committed, the vital factor is the tactical skill of the local commander. Actions intended to be brief are typically successful, perhaps because brief operations encounter fewer unexpected obstacles and are less vulnerable to large-scale counteractions, the bugbear of second-order, second-area military operations. The least risky, least costly, but usually lowest payoff secondary operations tend to be those with modest, local, and limited goals; however, the ultimate scope and consequences of nominally limited operations have often proved to be considerably larger than their originators expected.

Those victimized by German paratroop operations in 1940, the American bombing of Tokyo by B-25s in 1942, and the British torpedo plane attack at Taranto in late 1940 became so paranoid that they subsequently overreacted in their determination to prevent any repetition. In fact, those who planned the operations understood, as those victimized did not, that tactical surprise was key to the "success" of each and that an attempt to use the same tactic again could be extremely costly. Actually, two of the actions were conceded by their conductors to be minor tactical successes with more propaganda value than military substance. As designed, all three operations were intended to produce marginal benefits at modest cost; the targeted military forces saw in them deadly omens of a threatening future. All that may merely be a commentary on the advantages of hindsight when evaluating traditional military values. Nevertheless, in both theory and practice, limited-scope operations tend to be less vulnerable to counteractions than more massive second-area military actions, those designed to win wars or greatly improve one's strategic posture. And they consume by far the fewest and the most readily disposable resources.

To a considerable extent, the acquisition of bargaining chips is strategically relevant only in the instance of wars with limited objectives in which peace terms are negotiated rather than imposed by the victors. World Wars I and II were "total" in that sense; all settlements were

dictated. That outcome characterized the conquests of the Russians and the Rumanians by the Central Powers (1917) as much as the Versailles Treaty. Had the French and British been defeated before early 1918, when American reinforcements arrived, it is unlikely that the Germans would have left the allies in possession of any German colonial territories. (In one of his rare fits of despondency in May 1940, Churchill indicated that he expected to return most of those lost territories to Germany in any negotiated peace settlement. It was a brief aberration.)

Similarly, no territorial or political issues were negotiable (except among the Allies) when the Japanese and Germans collapsed in 1945. And even among the victors there was surprisingly little give and take.[1]

No armed conflict between nations since that time has had a comparable outcome; negotiation of a political settlement has attended the cessation of hostilities even when, as in Korea in 1953–1954, the matters to be resolved were more ideological than territorial.

The record of past second-area operations holds little that should surprise an intelligent, well-schooled staff officer. The attacker who opens a new front, breaches a sanctuary, or diverts forces from a central arena must be prepared for the possibility of at least temporarily weakening his own primary position in areas where much more important issues may be at stake. (The Germans took that risk, and won, when attacking Norway in 1940 while preparing a major attack on France, and in Yugoslavia in 1941 while preparing to attack Russia. A generation earlier, sending two Army corps from northern France to East Prussia contributed to the German defeat on the Marne, ensured the transition to trench warfare in the west, and frustrated the probability of a short war with few casualties.)

A prudent strategic planner sensitive to lessons of the past will pay heed to the traditional virtues of strategic surprise, economy of force, and the capability to withdraw one's forces safely if miscalculation becomes apparent. (At appalling cost, the British disregarded such elementary principles at Gallipoli in 1915 and before landing in Greece in 1941; they did better in Norway in 1940, and the Japanese did very well in the Aleutians in 1942.) The planner will strive for quick successes and avoid situations that inspire lethargic campaigning. Finally, he will be scrupulously objective in deciding whether a diversion of forces to a new objective will genuinely enhance his overall strategic posture. This was the Japanese problem in 1942 and the

[1]Recall that the Americans refused to accept Russian troops in Japan, that the Russians permitted nobody else in Eastern Europe, that Roosevelt and Truman resisted the reestablishment of "colonial" holdings, and that even in Korea and Vietnam "settlements" were commonly directed by the local military commanders, not the diplomats.

principal issue in the Anglo-American arguments about when and where to open a second front in 1943 and 1944.

Finally, the degree of an opponent's vulnerability does not alter the value and importance of a proposed operation, nor does the absence of risk necessarily imply a potential for gain, however seductive that calculation. Strategists concerned with evaluating proposed second-area operations must concentrate on identifying enemy assets that are not only fairly vulnerable, but are so important to an opponent that threatening, damaging, or usurping them will enlarge the possibility of influencing his subsequent behavior.

That, in the end, is the purpose of it all.

IV. CONCEPTS AND APPLICATIONS

The nature of a strategy involving second-area actions demands that one address as explicitly as possible the issues and the constraints associated with the strategy. In particular, although most of the time-honored rationales for investing in excursive operations seem to be as relevant today as in earlier centuries, it is advisable to consider specifically the range of possible *future* motivations for pursuing such a strategy.

Depending on the specifics of the occasion, the United States and its allies may be handicapped in dealing with an aggressive USSR and its allies and proxies because of the great distances from the United States to theaters of interest adjacent to the Soviet Union. Although the West may possess the raw capability to challenge the Soviets in such arenas, time and geography lessen Western chances for success. But if the Soviet-American confrontation is viewed in its global context, such Soviet geographical advantages may be offset by an inferiority in long-range power projection. And the Soviet Union has its own set of military handicaps, different from those of the United States but not necessarily less important.

Rather than merely respond to Soviet initiatives, the United States conceivably could capitalize on the limited force projection capabilities of the USSR, exploiting the flaws of the Soviet political, military, and economic systems. Attacking Soviet vulnerabilities rather than Soviet strengths is a rather obvious tactic by which the United States presumably could overcome some of the handicaps of its own military structure and strategic situation. The analogy to British strategies in conflicts with Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Napoleon is not all that far-fetched. The problem is to select the proper attack points and to make accurate calculations of the probable outcomes of various attacks. Striking an unprotected flank, an unprepared position, a hesitant ally, or a point of great economic fragility have long been elements of grand strategy. But conceptual opportunities extend to destabilizing an opponent by forcing or encouraging him to overextend himself in ways or places for which he has insufficiently prepared. The goal, then, is to exploit the classical advantages of strategic surprise, command of local approaches, and local superiority of force, but possibly in new ways.

Whether such a strategy has more than theoretical interest in the modern world depends on various considerations. First, resources sequestered for second-area applications must afford some reasonable

promise of producing commensurate effects. Second, the desired effects should be achievable without driving an opponent to major escalation, particularly not to a nuclear response. Finally, the actions undertaken in accordance with such a strategy must produce an end that accords with both broad national goals and immediate strategic objectives.

THE BASIS OF AN OUT-OF-AREA CONFRONTATION STRATEGY

The first task in planning for a strategy that has, as a principal element, second-area actions, is to assess how each of the two sides will view the interests, risks, and motives arising in a localized conflict between their forces. These are liable to depend on unpredictable specifics of the scenario. But case by case, one must assess the logical relationships between out-of-area options and the central issue, campaign, or conflict. In that context, although the term "second-area operations" suggests geographic expansion of fighting, other forms of conflict expansion include (among many) introducing new allies or new ways of fighting, or changing the means used, or the tempo of conflict, or the level of violence.

Second, an opponent may react to some specific out-of-area action in a wholly unforeseen way. The difficulty is not only of anticipating what he may do that specifically affects those areas where battle has been joined, but what responsive excursive action *he* might attempt.

Third, he who uses a strategy of expanding a conflict by lateral rather than escalatory action is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the targeted opponent can unambiguously distinguish deliberate from unintended, opportunistic, or happenstance events or consequences. Both the United States and the Soviet Union have aggressive (not to say reckless) allies and associates, and a major U.S.-Soviet confrontation would not be the first conflict that saw lesser powers exploit a large-power confrontation in their own interests. A Cuban attack on Guantanamo or an Israeli strike at Syria might or might not be related to a concurrent U.S.-Soviet confrontation elsewhere; if there were no association, that point would have to be established early.

Fourth, one should be prepared to consider that mere greed or cheap political motives may lie behind some out-of-area events. The Soviets and some of their satellites have a tradition of opportunism in military affairs and of relieving internal political pressures by undertaking foreign military adventures. That is not exclusively a Soviet-style response, of course; the Falkland Islands occupation by Argentina and

the Iran-Iraq war are other recent examples of international buccaneering. Khrushchev's clamor for the removal of Jupiter IRBMs from Turkey as a *quid pro quo* for withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba in 1962 is a splendid example of political face-saving in a negotiated settlement.

Fifth, the character of an out-of-area confrontation strategy must be consistent with its intended effect. Traditional rules of thumb have it that the best peacetime deterrent is a response commensurate with an enemy threat. Quite apart from the question of how the Soviets view "linkage" in response situations, an opponent may misunderstand what is happening if the response to some political or military action on his part is a different kind of military operation somewhere else in the world. Such actions must be preceded by careful calculations of the risks of disconnection, even when accompanied by a carefully thought out declaratory policy.

The sixth, and most important, prerequisite of such a strategy is to do the relevant planning, including steps far beyond the first, and to allocate adequate resources to implementation. An attractive and promising conception flawed in execution (as were the British campaigns of 1915 and 1941 in the Eastern Mediterranean) can have a deadly backlash. Dilution or division of forces in the expectation of some minor gain can result in a substantial near-term reverse with still larger long-term consequences. The immediate effect of the British diversion of troops and equipment from North Africa to Greece in 1941 was defeat in both areas; in the long run, the Germans were able to reestablish Axis control of Libya, breaking through the weakened residual of British forces there and deferring Allied occupation of the North African littoral by two years.

In the matter of implementation, two subordinate questions require attention. First, there are the practical problems of execution (addressed below). Second, there is the difficulty of justifying (or rationalizing) investments in out-of-area actions (or the creation of capabilities to undertake them) in preference to other options. That is, one must develop criteria for estimating the probable costs and the potential benefits of success in proposed actions as well as for evaluating the likelihood of success.

RISKS OF THE STRATEGY

Merely reviewing the historical record of conflicts deliberately initiated outside some central arena or conflict imparts a keen appreciation of the risks that attend recourse to a strategy of second-area

operation. Risk containment is a difficult but vital aspect of the decision process in that such a strategy becomes most attractive when there appear to be few opportunities to apply divertable resources beneficially in a primary theater. If opportunity is lacking in an unfavorable strategic balance, one must be very careful not to make a bad situation worse. Some broad categories of risks inherent in such a strategy come to mind.

First, one's lateral move must not induce an opponent to respond by *vertical* escalation. Judgments to this end involve assessment of enemy perceptions, interests, behavior, and capabilities. A classic misperception was the German conclusion in early 1917 that a renewed campaign of unlimited submarine warfare probably would not bring the United States into the war and that whatever the outcome U.S. forces would arrive too late to prevent a German victory on the Western Front.

Second, a peripheral move may encourage a hostile initiative in yet another new area. It is essential to understand the range of possible as well as probable responses so as not to create an excuse or an opportunity for an opponent to expand his goals in some way that will improve his overall strategic position. Among related risks are bringing on the defeat of, or causing severe damage to, friends and allies (as was the consequence of the British move into Greece in 1941). One should also protect against attracting new enemies to the conflict, unnecessarily antagonizing neutrals, and otherwise unfavorably altering the strategic balance. One of Germany's several strategic errors of 1917 was to insist on a total military and political capitulation on the Eastern Front and keeping major troop forces there after Russian resistance had collapsed but while territorial arrangements still had not been settled. Once the Western Front had been breached the Germans could have imposed whatever terms they liked on a prostrate Russia. Shifting troops to the West rather than holding them in reserve for a renewed offensive in Russia might have won the war in northern France in the spring of 1917. The concurrent entry of the United States would have meant little.

Third, it is essential to avoid squandering resources that may be crucial to a theater of primary interest. The essence of a second-area operation strategy is to worsen an opponent's overall situation without engaging his principal military forces. If the cost of a victory in some secondary arena is a considerable setback in a primary area, the risk is likely to be too high and the price too great. One of the second-order risks of adopting a second-area operation strategy as a national option is that it might encourage an opponent to provoke or invite an excursive attack with the specific aim of reducing the quantity or quality of forces that confront him (or his allies) in a primary theater. The

Japanese hoped to do that in the Aleutians in 1942, and the Russians successfully used that device in East Prussia in August 1914, although it was their French allies who benefited. It is essential to be alert to feints, diversions, and traps. All in all, the issue of which theater will offer the best returns on an investment of defense resources is the most important calculation to be made, and the most difficult.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

Once the risks and aims of a second-area operation strategy have been assessed, one confronts perhaps the hardest task: determining specifically how enemy weakness can usefully be exploited. Before embarking on a lateral campaign, one must answer certain questions. The most obvious is how the contemplated out-of-area action relates to the grand strategic goals being pursued. Even when some kinds of activities seem enormously attractive (expelling the Russians from Cuba, for instance), the outcomes of these actions are not automatically relevant to larger strategic objectives, the actions themselves do not necessarily represent the best use of scarce defense resources, and the net effect, if successful, is not guaranteed to offset the assorted costs.

A second question: Is the apparent enemy vulnerability truly exploitable? And if so, can the initiator be confident that the effects being sought will materialize in some fashion that is ultimately beneficial? A second-area attack that promises to further one's war aims may in the event take too long for its effects to be felt. In the interim, an enemy may consolidate his position, find new allies, or compensate for his losses. The Germans did all that while the allies were skittering about the Eastern Mediterranean in late 1914 and early 1915.

The historical record suggests the difficulty inherent in an *a priori* assessment of enemy vulnerabilities. Failures include pre-1940 estimates of the effects of strategic bombing, U.S. assessments of Japanese capabilities and aims in 1941, the Japanese evaluation of U.S. actions and capability after Pearl Harbor, evaluations of the effectiveness of bombing in Southeast Asia in the 1960s, Arab calculations before the planned 1967 attack on Israel, and pre-1940 calculation of the risks imposed on submarines by aircraft and radar. The list is lengthy. It suggests the kinds of problems associated with developing the plans and tools required to exploit enemy vulnerabilities. It is essential to avoid situations in which vertical escalation becomes necessary to restore a *status quo ante*. Reconquering a Soviet-occupied Western Europe is a particularly unpromising prospect.

A third essential question is how to segregate targeted enemy vulnerabilities from other enemy interests so that an opponent will not view a precisely orchestrated attack as an indiscriminate assault, and the desired outcome of an operation will not be overshadowed by uncontrolled effects. (Did the Americans *want* the Japanese reaction to the Doolittle raid to include a major naval attack on a numerically inferior American fleet that would be forced either to defend or to surrender Midway?)

Fourth, in some circumstances, it may be counterproductive to attack or exploit obvious vulnerabilities. For example, if weaknesses are symmetrical, the long-term consequences of legitimizing a certain kind of action (gas warfare, for example) may prove unpalatable. The Germans initiated the massive city-bombing attacks of World War II, and in the end they surely concluded that in such matters it was better to give than to receive. Moreover, in some admittedly specialized conditions knowledge of an enemy weakness can have lasting value and may even increase in worth as time passes. British restraint in exploiting the possession of an Enigma encrypting machine and American prudence in exploiting penetration of the Japanese "Purple" codes certainly paid substantial dividends.

Fifth, there is the by no means trivial issue of political will. The historical record indicates the natural reluctance of leadership to expand the scope, instruments, aims, and theaters of fighting if alternatives exist. Absolute rulers may override such misgivings, but there has been a trend toward more careful use of armed force since 1945. The few actual Russian interventions of the past four decades (Afghanistan, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Manchuria, etc.) have afforded few and small opportunities for effective Western responses. The Berlin Blockade and the Cuban Missile Crisis are examples of Soviet miscalculations in that respect. But so long as there are opportunities for peacefully negotiated ends to conflict, and so long as the dire consequences of vertical escalation are recognized (as in the 1948 Berlin crisis and the 1962 Cuban *contretemps*), even very clever plans for second-area operations may be held in reserve by political leaders.

Finally, in specialized cases, a nation may decide either to forgo *or* to exploit some attractive opportunity for lateral action to avoid altering otherwise favorable circumstances. The United States might or might not elect to undermine the financial stability of some Soviet satellite, or encourage Egypt to occupy Libya while the USSR was in great difficulty in Poland or was involved in yet another border clash with the Chinese. As the Soviets appreciated in 1939–1941, when Molotov totaled German and Franco-British losses in the same column and reported them as net credits to the USSR, it occasionally may be

disadvantageous to intervene in a situation that is basically unfavorable to an opponent.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

Although it is tempting merely to extrapolate from historical example in developing lessons for the contemporary military situation, it is essential to consider whether critical distinctions make a strategy of second-area operation irrelevant to the nuclear age.

Modern Western civilization dates from the emergence of a system of national European states during the 15th century. Since then, Western Europe has not successfully been invaded by marauding peoples, as occurred regularly in earlier centuries; but wars between national states have been recurrent and civil and ideological conflicts frequent. Religious wars marred the 1500s, although they were mostly confined to the hinterlands between Catholic and Protestant regions; and by the end of the century the residual conflicts had become more dynastic or imperial than ideological. The most intense and violent collisions were civil wars or local ideological (religious) wars. International conflicts were usually settled by negotiation after one side or the other had gained some military or naval advantage. Rarely was national survival an issue.[1] Major battles were infrequent and troop losses from combat ordinarily were smaller than from disease.

Until the emergence of revolutionary France, participants in the wars of the 17th and 18th centuries characteristically took pains to avoid destroying governments and transforming societies (except by attempting to impose religious observances on all classes). Even when one royal family supplanted another, the nature of national government in the affected state changed little. Dispossessed minor rulers were routinely recompensed if their territories were incorporated into larger states. Both dynastic and national indemnities were common (and rarely were onerous), and captured territories were bartered against one another in peace conferences. Generals avoided battle when outnumbered, maneuver was preferred to frontal conflict, and all sorts of bargains were struck in lieu of "fighting to a finish."

In the early 18th century the Duke of Marlborough reintroduced the concept of large-scale frontal conflict and, because he won all the battles he entered, put at risk both the basic prosperity and the dynastic ambitions of Bourbon France, although not its continued existence as a state. Both warfare and treaties of peace continued to be more or less

[1]Although a number of minor states were absorbed in the emergence of the larger national states.

stylized, to favor compromise and to preserve the status quo. Excepting Poland, which exhibited persistent suicidal tendencies, no major European state was extinguished by conquest in the 18th century. Several inchoate states (Germany, Italy, the Netherlands) acquired form and boundaries.

The era of the French Revolution and Napoleon changed all that. France became the master of Europe and in the process altered boundaries and imposed rulers on many of its neighbors. But the victors who gathered at Vienna in 1815 were careful to restore as much as they could of pre-1789 Europe, and for the next 100 years their successors mostly honored the terms of the settlement. Change occurred; new national states consolidated, large states grew, and small states were absorbed. But, excepting revolutionary wars and occasional civil conflicts, military disputes were brief, they ended before nations (or even dynasties, in most cases) had been fatally affected, and the settlements were not destructive. Even the Franco-Prussian war was of that nature: The harshest elements of the eventual Prussian terms were imposed because Paris refused to honor the central government's surrender orders; the French themselves chose to expel the Bonapartes. Losers in other conflicts—Austria, Russia, and Turkey—were hardly penalized.

The two world wars of this century constituted major departures from that pattern. Whatever may have been the nature of prewar goals in World War I (the Germans had explicitly planned to despoil two neutral states as preludes to stealing French possessions abroad, and the Austrians and the Russians each intended to incorporate fledgling Balkan states into their empires), on both sides the conflict involved greater intensity and ferocity than any other European conflicts, excepting religious wars and the wars of Napoleon, of the previous five centuries. All concerned extended their war aims to include the dismemberment of enemy states.

World War II was even more extreme. Germany resorted to genocide to change the demography as well as the institutions and boundaries of Europe, and for a brief time succeeded, although Germany itself was the ultimate loser.

That war ended in the first use of nuclear weapons, which less than ten years thereafter existed in kinds and quantities capable of obliterating armies, fleets, and cities in hours rather than months or years and which 20 years later could extinguish life on earth. But for seven of the eight decades in this century, with the exception of occasional civil and ideological or religious wars (the Russian Revolution, the Spanish Civil War, the anti-colonial eruptions in Africa, and the recent Iran-Iraq fighting, for instance), conflicts have tended to be limited in

area and objective and to have consequences that seem insignificant when compared with the devastation of the two world wars.

CONFLICT IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

The spectrum of national conflict during the 20th century generally has the taxonomy shown in Table 2.

The record of conflict for the past five centuries strongly suggests that limited war has been the norm (revolutionary, civil, and ideological-religious clashes excepted) and that with three awesomely important exceptions, unrestrained wars between or among major states have been avoided.

Table 2

TYPES OF CONFLICT[a]

Type	Consequence
Unrestrained (total war)	Destruction of states, societies, governments, cultures; enormous materiel damage
Localized high-intensity conflicts	
Revolutions	Similar to unrestrained wars, but confined to one nation or region; great materiel damage; state and society altered
Civil wars	
Ideological wars (chiefly religious, often civil)	Smaller scope; regional effects; intense but localized materiel damage
Limited wars	Constrained objectives; efforts to limit materiel damage, casualties; continuance of state, society not threatened; government of "loser" may be altered or subjugated

[a]One important qualification: on occasion, one party to an armed conflict may entertain (and voice) ambitions to destroy his opponent utterly, and the other party may (of necessity, by choice, through greater wisdom, or merely in being more civilized) entertain very limited war aims. The several Arab-Israeli wars fall into this category.

The question, then, is *which* model best characterizes the potential future of international conflict between or among the large, well-armed nations of today's world. Is it more likely that any conflict will promptly escalate to a nuclear exchange, with all that implies, or that restraint will be exercised because all concerned recognize the probable consequences of escalation?

It is easy to conceive of a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, antagonists for 40 years, in which they are unable to avoid a direct military clash (although they have managed to do so for all those years, notwithstanding half a dozen collisions that in some circumstances could have precipitated military actions). But the pattern of the recent past suggests also that each will proceed circumspectly, restraining its extremists, content with minor gain (or conceding minor loss). The USSR has exploited opportunity; the United States, preoccupied with the threat of nuclear escalation, has been conservative (since 1963 at least). In such circumstances, the ability to plan, conduct, and *terminate* "successful" second-area actions becomes a vital national asset. Partly because of its monolithic political structure, the Soviet Union has been more successful in that respect than the United States. It is also conceivable that simply displaying the resources necessary to the conduct of limited second-area operations and evincing a willingness to utilize them might make its demonstration unnecessary.

Alternatively, if a sober assessment of Soviet tendencies and sensitivities leads to the conclusion that the Soviet state may be incapable of responding to a strategy of second-area operations except by vertical escalation, there is not much point to investing resources in the creation of the requisite capability. Experience suggests, however, that such may not be the case.

First, the historical record prompts the analyst to ask how second-area actions relate to central theater confrontations. Some theorists will surely maintain that there can be no "second-area" conflicts between Soviet and U.S. forces in the modern world, that war, once joined, will be total. But at best that is an unproven premise. The crucial psychological distinctions necessary to a second-area operation strategy seem to rest on the discreteness of regions and spheres of influence, on appreciation of the concept of linkage, and on historical custom and practice.

Both sides have global interests. Longstanding "traditional" or customary boundaries to action may not pertain to a nuclear world even though the fact of that world makes both sides cautious, sensitive to implications and interpretations of potential actions, and anxious to communicate intent. Sometimes disapproval is all that is communi-

cated, as in the recent instances of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the imposition of martial law in Poland.

The territorial integrity of the United States and the USSR today seems unchallengable. Direct attack on either homeland presumably would constitute a profound act of aggression. The concept of a homeland sanctuary is not an abstract notion relating only to direct attack. Soviet political philosophy and national policy seem to be based on a broad interpretation of that term: Witness Soviet concern with space-based surveillance, with direct broadcast into its borders by other nations, with any intrusion into its airspace or coastal waters, and with the concept of on-site inspection to verify arms control agreements.

Similarly, the security of Western Europe has been so important that the United States has not given up the declared right to use nuclear weapons should the Soviets cross into the Federal Republic of Germany. Indeed, Dulles-era alliance policies were based on such concepts of interconnected interests, evidenced by the relationship between some locally defined tripwire and forces of massive retaliation. (This principle still holds to some degree in some places, such as West Berlin.) Notions of sanctuaries have been extended beyond key homelands. One result of the Cuban missile crisis was a U.S. guarantee not to invade the island. In short, some kinds of lateral action presumably would be considered more serious than the military ingredients of an individual act would independently suggest.

In like manner, the multi-theater nature of the world military situation could militate against out-of-area excursions of the traditional sort. The global military balance is intricate and the political and strategic impediments to the rapid reassignment of forces are more than clear, as both superpowers have repeatedly demonstrated. There is no colonial world to be casually ravaged, although unstable postcolonial states aligned with one side or the other sometimes are tempting targets. Incursions in any particular region call distant allies and protectors into play. Technological and military assistance trends indicate that second-area operations could become increasingly difficult to bring off successfully, not easier. A state that seeks a capability for such operations will also attempt to protect against them, so that in the end they may become less likely rather than more.

In the modern world, the nature of new political orientations and alignments also influences the possibilities for out-of-area operations. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union can count on a warm welcome by hungry Third World states in whose affairs they intervene. Russians are, if anything, less popular in Saigon or Hanoi today than were Americans a decade ago.

One must also consider the demonstrated patterns of Soviet military behavior over the past three decades. Generally, the USSR seems disinclined to casual intervention; Soviet incursions seem to have been based on most deliberate calculations. This suggests that Soviet leaders should be able to recognize similar motivations and respond accordingly in the event of a resolute U.S. move in some secondary area. But given the violence of Soviet reactions to intrusions into its own territory and Soviet indifference to the territorial rights of other states (Sweden, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, China, and so on), assessing probable Soviet responses to any action that might even loosely be construed as hostile remains a thorny problem.

A strategy incorporating opportunistic second-area operations must provide for careful and thorough planning. Effective second-area moves that do not provoke an escalatory response may be difficult to define and, when the target is the Soviet Union, may have unpredictable outcomes. The challenge is to identify actions that will result in gains that exceed the costs and consequences that are both predictable (within reasonable limits) and acceptable.

V. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

The potential benefits and risks associated with a strategy of second-area confrontations must be treated in context. At the onset, that means setting a value as well as a price on the potential returns from the initiation of a lateral operation, and it means thoroughly assessing the rationale for such actions. The initiator may perceive an opportunity for gaining some territorial, political, or economic advantage, but the usual justifications for actual investment in such operations derive from perceptions of opportunity to break out of stalemated situations, preempt new opponents, exploit opportunities for attacking vulnerable flanks or the weak allies of an opponent, or force an opponent to divert or expend resources that he could better use elsewhere. Those motivations (and others that were suggested in Sec. II) may also capture an opponent's imagination, which means that one must be aware of his own potential vulnerability to second-area actions and guard against them. The potential initiator of any proposed second-area operation presumably has determined that he has access to and can actually utilize resources not currently essential to the central theater and that the diversion of those resources will not endanger his position there. The accuracy and comprehensiveness of such risk assessments are the first critical elements in determining the ultimate success of the operation. But the context of second-area actions extends from low level of violence maneuvers to major collisions involving massive forces, and the capability to operate successfully in the small does not alter the likelihood that second-area actions will have little influence on the outcomes of large-scale central wars. In some instances, useful benefits arise from particular types of second-area actions, and having a capability to exploit promising opportunities can be very valuable. To that extent, at least, the strategy remains attractive.

An ability to initiate limited-scope second-area operations implies an ability to respond to them, although it does not automatically follow. If a skillful defense has a better chance of prevailing than an equally skillful assault (unless the forces are disproportionate to one another), the ability to respond effectively to an opponent's attempt at a second-area operation (particularly one with war-winning or balance-controlling potential) can be more important than being able to initiate such actions. In that an ability to initiate modest second-area operations is inherent in the creation of a quick response capability

(although the reverse is not true), *the response capability becomes a preferred option.*

The ability to respond effectively is important in another context. Deterring an opponent tempted to undertake second-area actions requires having him convince himself that his total losses (or costs) will exceed his peripheral gains, or that he cannot possibly succeed in whatever secondary operations he is considering. The essence of such a deterrent is being able to respond promptly and in appropriate strength to any excursionary operation that could tempt an opponent.

If a second-area action will probably evoke a response, the contemplation of such actions must include a careful consideration of the probability that the response will be escalatory. The initiator must also consider the consequences of a defeat, however limited in scope: potential loss of allies, an unfavorable change in the central balance of forces, high casualties or the waste of valuable materiel assets, and so on. The probability that human and materiel resources will be expended so profligately that another critical area will be dangerously weakened must also be taken into account. In that context, once an operation is underway, its masters must continually review the risk of throwing good resources after bad—of forgetting to honor the dictum of sunk costs—and the counterpart risk that various pressures will make escalation the response to a threatened local defeat.

The tendency to underestimate the potential of an opponent or to ignore the large strategic uncertainties associated with an apparent opportunity to profit from a lateral operation has, in the past, encouraged political leaders to allocate inadequate resources to the operation. Military commanders, on the whole, seem to be rather less susceptible to that tendency, but they are not immune. The great risk is that of being too optimistic about the feasibility of achieving a military success on the cheap. The British and the Italians were particularly prone to that error in their 1940–1941 campaigns.

A lesser but nonnegligible danger is exaggerated caution, which can permit a damaged opponent to reform his forces or a bold opponent to preempt the field. Chamberlain's principal advisors were so slow in approving and shaping the proposed Norway landings of early 1940 that the Germans were enabled to seize the initiative, and the Allied expedition so laboriously assembled to occupy the Norwegian coast became a force charged with recovering it from the Germans.

Similarly, there is great danger of tunnel vision in decisions to undertake what the initiator perceives to be a limited scope operation but which the party under attack views in quite another light and to which he responds with unexpected vigor. For example, in 1911 the German government dispatched a gunboat to the Moroccan port of

Agadir in an effort to coerce major colonial concessions from the French. The French reaction was tepid, but the British responded to what they viewed as aggressive behavior by making ostentatious preparations for war, to the complete surprise and considerable dismay of the Kaiser. Oddly, the Germans seem not to have learned from the experience: They were equally astonished at the British response to their 1914 invasion of Belgium, which they viewed as a minor excursion while en route to Paris.

In conflicts between nuclear-armed superpowers, violations of sanctuaries or breaches of unspoken rules could have cataclysmic effects. The precise limits of national sovereignty sometimes are defined retrospectively, to the occasional consternation of the infringing power. Identifying tripwires and classifying them correctly is essential; failing to do so creates large and unnecessary risks.

In dealing with the Soviets, it is essential to understand that their actions and reactions rarely are spontaneous or casual and often are violent. The furtherance of some long-term objective or the protection of some prized asset is the usual rationale for Soviet action. In that context, one must carefully evaluate the potential Soviet reaction either to a second-area incursion or to foiling the achievement of some objective that the Soviets consider very important. Linkage is an American concept that the Soviets have consistently depreciated and frequently denounced; whether they would employ linked responses to American second-area initiatives is a question that has yet to be fully explored. Soviet doctrine and strategic concepts differ so strikingly from those of the United States that mirror imagery becomes a real danger for U.S. planners.

On balance, the opportunistic pursuit of peripheral goals does not appear to have much promise in dealing with the Soviet Union. In the absence of linkage, the deterrent effect is likely to be slight, and peripheral skirmishing will probably not affect Soviet behavior during a confrontation in some theater of major interest. Excepting such direct confrontations as the Cuban Missile Crisis and the military buildup associated with the Berlin dispute of 1962, the West has taken no action more extreme than an embargo in response to Soviet provocations, and in no instance did such moves have any obvious effect on subsequent Soviet behavior. Efforts at coercion were not productive in the pipeline and tactical missile (Pershing II and cruise-missile deployments) confrontations of the early 1980s. Although all that says nothing for the possible Soviet response to a second-area military operation, it suggests generally that the Soviets are insensitive to indirect pressure. Still, in some respects the position of the United States and its NATO allies in the 1980s is not unlike that of Britain and its

continental allies at various times during the wars of the 18th and early 19th centuries. The enemy was a militarily strong, economically shaky continental power ambitious to expand both geographically and in global influence. The analogy should not be carried too far, of course: No war is underway and a "victory" for either side presumably could occur only in the aftermath of a nuclear exchange that, at best, would make the United States and the Soviet Union minor powers.

ANALYSIS BY SCENARIO

One promising approach to the analysis of the implications, risks, and potential benefits of a second-area action strategy is to evaluate scenarios that include exercises of such a strategy. They would probably have to be restricted to situations designed to produce a military effect. It is not that intrinsic gain, political advantage, or economic benefit derived from overawing an opponent is irrelevant, but rather that from the defense planner's vantage the uncertainties involved in a strategy based on intimidation are too large to support force and employment decisions, especially given the Soviets' tendency to think through their military actions in great detail and to act the part of an indignant leviathan in international affairs.

Little is to be gained in exercising second-area action scenarios that include a large-scale, escalating, undecided conflict involving Soviet and American forces. In all probability, all available resources on both sides would be invested in the existing conflict. The interesting cases are those arising in confrontation or conflict situations in which further escalation is militarily or politically inadvisable. Then the problem becomes one of identifying assets the Soviets value but cannot cheaply protect. It is always conceivable that Soviet aggression in one area could be countered by undertaking operations against a target the Soviets nominally value even more highly, but that again raises linkage and escalation issues that have defied analysis.

For several reasons, some of the scenarios with the greatest potential interest—those arising in limited, regional superpower confrontations—are among the most difficult to construct. Too many critical data are lacking. But there are four categories of scenarios in which a second-area action strategy has some obvious attractions.

First are the peacetime or crisis scenarios, mostly "nonmilitary" in nature, but some initially involving or later escalating to the use of armed force. They stem from economic sanctions, embargoes, condemnation resolutions, and similar initiatives, primarily of diplomatic origin, which have typified past confrontations. In various conceivable circumstances, they could threaten to lead to higher levels of violence.

Blockades represent a second level. Isolated preemptive strikes at non-homeland forces constitute a special case of this class of scenarios. As a general rule, military actions likely to result from escalation in such cases would probably be characterized by surprise, well-defined goals, limitations on the nature and size of the force used, and discrimination in choice of target. Crises arising from such actions tend to occur outside of a "chain" of events and do not automatically force a response, *per se*. The Israeli attack on the Osirak reactor and Israeli air strikes against Syrian positions in Lebanon in 1982 and 1983 are examples of such attacks; the American blockade of Cuba in 1962 and the ineptly managed British-French-Israeli attack on Suez in 1956 are classic instances. For the most part, a good case can be made for classifying such actions as *either* secondary operations or carefully controlled vertical escalations. The distinction is mostly in the viewpoint of the observer.

Generally, however, such scenarios are of limited interest because they are indifferently relevant to patterns of *global* conflict. The exceptions may be in cases of regional preemption, which is a subject for considerably more study than it has received.

The second generic scenario in which there may be attractive opportunities are those grim cases where general war seems to be imminent. Both sides are doubtless aware of the great advantages to be realized from preemption. Modern technological and political developments have added new incentives to the traditional pressure to go first: Indeed, this is the basis for the widespread fear that singularly unfortunate events can be triggered by crisis instability. But although political inhibitions may preclude a full-scale attack, both temptation and motivation argue for nibbling at an opponent in ways that will not precipitate a counterstroke. Discriminating attacks or small campaigns that may interfere with alliance mobilization schedules, strikes to intimidate wavering allies, or acts designed to influence world opinion are examples. Such actions would constitute second-area actions in a scenario that assumes the potential imminence of a major war. Being able to foil such moves becomes an important asset.

The third class of scenarios in which the opportunities for out-of-area operations are pronounced is that in which a central collision has occurred but where neither side has been able to achieve even limited campaign objectives, the conflict has involved only conventional weapons, and both parties perceive vertical escalation to be highly inadvisable. One party may be hopelessly entangled in a defensive situation that promises nothing but stalemate, or the political or resource costs of continuing the original line of action may be unconscionably high. Classic examples of such unhappy developments

include the "phoney war" in the West in 1939, the British position after Dunkirk, and the situation along the Western Front once it had stabilized in 1914, when the allies simply could not muster the forces needed to expel the German invaders and the Germans lacked the resources to break through.

Escalation, second-area operations, or peace negotiations are the obvious alternatives to continued stalemate, which may have unpalatable domestic consequences. The inability of the United States to "win" the Vietnam War prompted all three responses simultaneously in the hope of furthering various political or minor military objectives: to force the enemy to the peace table, to put North Vietnam's backers on notice, to impede the resupply of the Viet Cong, and so on. Some of those actions may have been responses to frustration, some may have been generated by internal U.S. bureaucratic pressures, or others may have been stimulated by a public perception of a war that could not be "won" in the classical way.

The fourth set of scenarios in which opportunities can be perceived is in some respects a variant of the third: a situation in which one side has acquired a considerable advantage or has otherwise been enabled to release resources previously entailed, and has the option of deciding whether and where to apply them. Conventional military wisdom urges their application to the central arena. It is conceivable, however, that greater advantage could arise from any of several alternative uses.

One example concerns the situation after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which took Russia out of World War I, when the Germans elected to use troops freed from the Eastern Front in a massive assault on British, French, and newly arrived American forces in France. Obvious alternative uses included driving a stricken Italy to surrender; assaulting the disorganized Salonika front and inflicting another major defeat on the allies in the Balkans; holding the released troops in reserve for a massive counterstroke when the inevitable allied spring 1918 offensive had broken its back on German entrenchments manned by unwearied, undefeated troops; or assuming a defensive stance and reinvigorating the strained German economy and civil morale by requisitioning food and other materiel from the Ukraine. In retrospect, any of the alternatives would seem to have been preferable to the course that was selected. The consequence of the failure of the German spring offensive of 1918 was German collapse in late 1918.

A second case was the Russian negotiation of a settlement with the Japanese in the fall of 1941. It had two effects: The Russians moved their Manchurian army to the defense of Moscow; and the Japanese were freed to concentrate for an attack on British, Dutch, and American holdings in Southeast Asia. The course of events in late 1941

might have been very different if neither force had been free to move from its Manchurian station. And not many Americans have counted Pearl Harbor as one of the lesser casualties of the successful defense of Moscow in 1941.

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

The success of a strategy of exploiting opportunities for second-area operations would depend on a vast number of considerations, not all of which have been discussed here. Scenarios could be devised to test the validity of some of the classic assumptions about second-area operations. However, the scenarios may tend toward arbitrariness in the sense that even a mild degree of freedom in important variables will shape crucial political and strategic dimensions of the problem. A scenario exercise might be useful for training, or for exposing senior officials to the complexities of the strategy, but the utility of such an approach for practical military planning remains to be demonstrated.

It is not evident that it will ever be feasible to define Soviet response tendencies with the precision needed to satisfy the requirements of a second-area action strategy. Such precision is important for several reasons. A U.S. second-area operation must be sufficiently well designed to ensure that it does not incite undesirably violent Soviet responses. "Well designed" here refers both to the character of the attack (its potential for causing serious collateral damage, the extent to which its success would threaten national survival, or the degree to which it infringes on sovereignty or violates territorial or political sanctuaries) and its appropriateness given our understanding of how enemy leadership will view it. Moreover, precision in an attack is necessary if the effects of that attack are to be anticipated. Effects could prove to be far from those foreseen, even if the main operation were militarily successful, or even *because* it was successful. It is vital not to send the wrong signals, and particularly important to ensure that the message transmitted is not that the United States has abandoned its interests in the primary theater in the pursuit of spoils or consolation prizes.

A great deal of thought must be invested in considering how one might successfully exploit certain obviously attractive enemy vulnerabilities: internal security controls, demographic instabilities, alliance weaknesses, and civilian morale are examples. These are not classic second-area targets; they occur because of the structure of Soviet society and the nature of the Soviet empire. By the same token, they are potential targets known to be of great sensitivity, and calculations of possible Soviet responses to attacks on them must be carefully done.

Success against any of those "targets" conceivably could bring on the collapse of the Soviet state, an eventuality of which the Soviets certainly must be aware.

Having recourse to a strategy that invokes second-area actions should be wholly contingent on having carefully evaluated the possible courses any campaign might subsequently take. Unintended escalation and re-escalation are perils to be avoided. Nor does the constellation of desirable outcomes include losing allies or accumulating new enemies. Sometimes it is better to let a crisis go its own way, and sometimes it may make sense to leave an enemy vulnerability undisturbed for the moment, awaiting a more promising opportunity. (The Poles are most unlikely to reconcile themselves to Soviet occupation however long it endures, nor are the Czechs or Hungarians. And the Chinese appetite for regaining territories seized by the czars will not be sated by trade agreements.)

Even if all other aspects of this problem are reasonably well resolved, actions that could be interpreted by either allies or opponents as deliberate escalation are not in great favor with political leaders in the West; threats of nuclear responses and weakened alliance ties have been among the usual consequences in the past. And as the presidential campaign of 1964 demonstrated, domestic political considerations influence *proclaimed* U.S. military postures as well as those of its allies.

Taking all the preceding caveats into account, it is vital to ensure that any specific operation, whether lateral or central, represents the best use of limited defense resources. (That the principal national objective may be victimized by investment in secondary excursions probably constitutes the weightiest potential argument *against* undertaking any specific operation.) In a broader sense, the "best use" issue arises as soon as the possibility of adopting such a strategy is voiced: Effective second-area operations of the sort considered here are almost certain to depend on the adjustment of force structures and the creation (or dedication) of special forces.

Thus, from the perspective of a defense planner, the key issues to be resolved in the matter of a second-area action strategy relate to uncertainty. To escape from a situation dominated by the risks of nuclear employment or large-scale nonnuclear general war may require at least partial commitment to a strategy that invokes more—but different—uncertainties than those arising in classical deterrent strategies or central front wars. Many of those uncertainties may be quite unaddressable in advance of a real crisis; developing general rules for handling them will be difficult. The crucial problem is, therefore, to evaluate the costs and benefits involved in trading one set of problems for a different but not necessarily less troublesome set.

That will be a bothersome calculation. It must take account of the possibility of denuding central forces of essential capabilities and the

rationale for (and costs of both creating and preserving) the kinds of dedicated, specialized forces required conceptually for most second-area operations. Immediate situation-specific tactical factors will clamor for consideration: The scope and nature of local force balances and the potential for achieving tactical or strategic surprise are important issues. Whether a particular operation is worth setting afoot probably should hinge as much on the proven quality of available tactical command as on the notional advantages of success, however assured it may seem in postulation. Even for operations intended to be brief, logistic resupply assurances are vital. In all instances of second-area operations, the local and central command must be prepared for continual reassessment of the long-term potential for gain and loss; they must preserve the willingness either to enlarge forces (which must be available for summons) or to withdraw them, whatever the emotional content of the engagement. And, finally, unless the limited objectives of the initiator are intelligibly communicated to the opponent, escalation may result. Restraint and resolve are equally important; in second-area conflicts where the opportunity for achieving principal war aims is not present, one must be as ready to let the enemy withdraw "with the honors of war" as to concede that the effort was misplaced.

Notwithstanding which, there is great value to being able to exploit opportunities for lateral operations that may arise in the course of conflict or confrontation and still greater value to being able to spoil an opponent's operations. Although the case is not proven, it may also be too risky to undertake military actions against Soviet forces during a crisis or confrontation that has not yet moved to conflict. Tripwires are dangerous to all.

Once conflict has begun, opportunities are most likely to occur when central stalemates exist or when one party to a conflict is momentarily incapable of confronting his opponent and is tempted to seek cheap peripheral victories (particularly if he hopes to offset earlier costly losses). But such opportunities tend to characterize limited wars or pre-conflict confrontations in which neither party is anxious to put his principal assets at risk. The immediate risk is smaller, and so are the potential near-term gains. A succession of small victories of that sort can influence long-term outcomes in a continuing confrontation, but having lost several small engagements encourages one to enlarge the next in the effort to change the trend. Still, being able to marshall forces quickly, to project them accurately, and to apply them decisively has great potential value for such contingencies. Deterrence has many faces.

When capabilities and opportunities are lumped together, Soviet second-area options do not appear to be either abundant or notably promising. That is particularly true for pre-conflict crises. It is

difficult to judge whether exposed U.S. forces in Berlin, South Korea, or Guantanamo would be viewed as attractive second-order targets, perhaps for proxy forces, in the event of a Soviet-U.S. collision elsewhere. Nor do U.S. opportunities for crisis-phase second-area operations against Soviet forces hold obvious promise once the risk of an escalatory response is taken into account. The United States has an apparent edge in strategic mobility and has considerably more experience with remote area operations than have the Soviets, but no Soviet forces are in the sorts of exposed positions the Americans occupy. Each has allies and dependents who might become the targets of second-area operations, particularly if open conflict had occurred elsewhere, but it is not evident that the game would be worth the candle in most instances. Such asymmetries of risk and gain, loss and benefit, capability and opportunity, characterize most prospective occasions for second-area actions.

It would be foolish to assess the value and probability of success of potential second-order operations solely, or even largely, in terms of earlier outcomes. Yet a review of the past supports some general observations. For instance, few second-area operations have influenced the courses of major wars. They may well have had cumulative effects; that is even more difficult to assess. If they caused a diversion of forces from a central front, that occasionally had a lasting effect. Sometimes, however, the forces diverted proved to be those of the attacker rather than the defender; some second-area operations of that kind progressed quickly from misconception to disaster.

Of all peripheral operations, those instituted in pursuit of specific and limited tactical gains or other modest goals seem to have had the greatest potential for payoff. They also have had a high potential for uncertain outcomes far more imposing than anticipated.

Experience suggests that prudence is the most important aspect of a second-area action strategy. Preemption has occasionally paid dividends, but the costs of failure are great. Tactical and strategic surprise and superb generalship have characterized most successes. If the vital interests of both parties are equally at stake in the primary theater, second-area actions often amount to little more than harassment at the peripheries.

If the various peripheral conflicts of the past three decades[1] are representative of potential future confrontations, the conflict patterns of the 18th and 19th centuries may be more relevant than those of 1918 and 1945. Indeed, the conduct and settlements of the two great 20th century wars may represent departures from the norm. If near-

[1]Israeli-Arab wars, Vietnam, Iran-Iraq, Afghanistan, India-Pakistan, Lebanon, Korea.

total national destruction is the probable consequence of uninhibited central war, carefully limited peripheral operations may become the only way station between peace and destruction.

There is much to be said for having a capability to strike skillfully and adroitly at second-area targets in favorable circumstances. If viewed as a no-cost adjunct to creating a capability to foil Soviet operations of that sort, it becomes an attractive option. But given the persistent uncertainties about Soviet responses to pressure and obvious Soviet sensitivities to "violations" of sovereignty, the initiative use of such a capability in peacetime carries grave risks. Having the capability is a useful deterrent; deciding how or when to use it hinges not on the attractiveness of the concept but on the calculated feasibility of bringing off a successful operation without evoking highly undesirable side effects.

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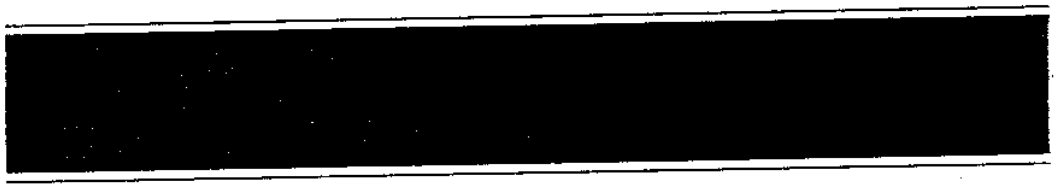
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