ANALYSIS

THE CHALLENGE OF INTEGRATED DETERRENCE: FROM THE "NEW LOOK" TO TODAY

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Revisionist, authoritarian powers are on the march, testing the resilience of the West and emboldening one another. Russia has invaded both Georgia and Ukraine in the fifteen years since Washington and its allies declared that those countries "will become members of NATO."[1] Iran's proxies in the Middle East have massacred hundreds of Israeli civilians, launched dozens of attacks against U.S. forces, and interrupted international shipping in the Red Sea.[2] China is backing Moscow and Tehran in their adventurism while threatening to invade or blockade Taiwan.[3] This pattern of authoritarian aggression is complicated by a rapidly shifting military balance. The conventional military superiority that Washington enjoyed during the post-Cold War period is a fading memory.[4] Meanwhile, Russia, China, and North Korea are on track to deploy a combined nuclear force that more than doubles that of the United States by the end of the decade.[5] From the gray zone to the strategic nuclear balance, the United States' deterrence posture is eroding.

The centerpiece of the Biden administration's answer to this challenge is "integrated deterrence." As first described by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in April 2021, integrated deterrence will "use existing capabilities, and build new ones, and use all of them in networked ways—hand in hand with our allies and partners" across "multiple realms, all of which must be mastered to ensure our security in the 21st century."[6] The concept was highlighted in the 2022 *National Security Strategy* as "the seamless combination of capabilities to convince potential adversaries that the cost of their hostile activities outweigh their benefits,"[7] and in the 2022 *National Defense Strategy* (NDS) as being "enabled by combat-credible forces prepared to fight and win, as needed, and backstopped by a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent."[8] In each iteration, the administration has added

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[1] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Bucharest Summit Declaration," April 3, 2008; available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm.

[2] Carla Babb, "U.S. Forces Attacked 151 Times in Iraq, Syria During the Biden Presidency," *Voice of America*, November 17, 2023; available at https://www.voanews.com/a/us-forces-attacked-151-times-in-iraq-syria-during-biden-presidency-/7360366.html.

[3] Dan Blumenthal, "China Takes Advantage of a New Era of World War," *The National Interest*, November 27, 2023; available at https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-takes-advantage-new-era-world-war-207521.

[4] See, for example, Andrew F. Bacevich, Jr., *The Origins of Victory: How Disruptive Military Innovation Determines the Fates of Great Powers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023).

[5] Robert M. Gates, "The Dysfunctional Superpower: Can a Divided America Deter China and Russia," *Foreign Affairs* 102:6 (November/December 2023), pp. 30-44.

[6] Department of Defense, "Secretary of Defense Remarks for the U.S. INDOPACOM Change of Command," April 30, 2021; available at https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/2592093/secretary-of-defense-remarks-for-the-us-indopacom-change-of-command/.

[7] Joseph R. Biden, *National Security Strategy* (Washington: The White House, 2022), p. 22.

[8] Lloyd J. Austin, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington: The Pentagon, 2022), p. 1.

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little of substance to Austin's initial claim that "[i]ntegrated deterrence means all of us giving our all."[9]

In the absence of detail, outside observers have defined the concept to suit their own ends. The administration's critics warn against relying on "non-military tools" to deter America's adversaries,[10] or simply decry the rubric as a meaningless "platitude."[11] More sympathetic observers faintly praise the idea as "not so bad,"[12] or encourage the administration to move swiftly before the integrated deterrence concept is deemed "dead on arrival."[13] The Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States described integrated deterrence as "a good start" toward "a truly integrated, whole-of-government strategy [that brings] all elements of American power to bear," but found "little evidence of its implementation across the interagency."[14]

Alternately unloved and unimplemented, the "integrated deterrence" rubric may well be deemed unsalvageable by future administrations. Nonetheless, the concept highlights challenges for deterrence that are both longstanding and newly urgent. How should the United States compensate for the loss of its post-Cold War conventional military superiority? How can various instruments of power be integrated without merely substituting one for another and risking diminished effectiveness in the trade? How can Washington maintain allied assurance as wars expand into new, untested domains? These challenges are not novel. They were at the heart of Cold War debates over deterrence, including the Eisenhower administration's "New Look" and the Kennedy-Johnson administration's "Flexible Response" strategies. The Reagan administration's success was a product of how it managed those challenges. Revisiting those historical debates can shed light on the challenges that Washington faces today and how difficult it will be to achieve a satisfactory degree of deterrence and assurance in the years ahead.

New Domains, Old Dilemmas

The "integrated deterrence" rubric employed by the Biden administration draws on two recent lines of policy research. The first has focused on the dilemma associated with "gray zone" conflicts in which the stakes may be "too small" to risk great power war. Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution, for example, has argued that the United States

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[9] Department of Defense, "Secretary of Defense Remarks," op cit.

[10] Thomas Spoehr, "Bad Idea: Relying on "Integrated Deterrence" Instead of Building Sufficient U.S. Military Power," *Defense360*, December 30, 2021; available at https://defense360.csis.org/bad-idea-relying-on-integrated-deterrence-instead-of-building-sufficient-u-s-military-power/.

[11] Mike Gallagher, "The Pentagon's 'deterrence' strategy ignores hard-earned lessons about the balance of power," *The Washington Post*, September 29, 2021.

[12] Kathleen McInnis, "Integrated Deterrence is Not So Bad," *CSIS Commentary*, October 27, 2022; available at https://www.csis.org/analysis/integrated-deterrence-not-so-bad.

[13] Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Becca Wasser, *No I in Team: Integrated Deterrence with Allie and Partners* (Washington: Center for a New American Security, 2023), p. 1.

[14] Madelyn Creedon, Jon L. Kyl, et al., *America's Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States* (Alexandria: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2023), p. 31.

requires an "asymmetric, integrated deterrence" that combines "economic reprisal after an initial enemy aggression" and sufficient military strength to "prevent any further conquests" without trying to reverse "initial enemy aggressions."[15] A second line of research has focused on the need for "integrated strategic deterrence" in response to the emergence of "cross-domain threats" in cyberspace and outer space that could implicate the nuclear balance.[16] The Center for Global Security Research at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, for example, organized dozens of workshops to flesh out the integrated strategic deterrence concept between 2015 and 2021.[17]

Concerns about gray zones and disruptive technologies were familiar to policymakers during the early Cold War, when the Eisenhower administration's "New Look" strategy for deterrence and competition with the Soviet Union was eroded by the extension of the Cold War into new geographical and warfighting domains. The New Look sought to leverage the American lead in nuclear forces to convince Moscow that Washington could control the pace of escalation in any confrontation, all the while cutting defense spending from a Korean War peak of 14 percent of GDP.[18] The best known iteration of the strategy was Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' description of the "massive retaliation" concept, which sought "a maximum deterrent at a bearable cost" by substituting the "deterrent of massive retaliatory power" for local defenses along the U.S. global security perimeter.[19] Although the New Look was not necessarily synonymous with massive retaliation, the two concepts were often conflated, including by Admiral Arthur Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who claimed that the New Look "means that atomic forces are now our primary forces. It means that actions by other forces, on land, sea or air are relegated to the secondary role."[20]

Some of the most ardent critics of the New Look were to be found in the U.S. Army. This is unsurprising, since the Army was trapped in Radford's "secondary role," serving as a billpayer for the Air Force and Navy's strategic nuclear build-ups and suffering a nearly 50 percent personnel reduction as a result.[21] General Maxwell Taylor, who served as Army Chief of Staff between 1955 and 1959, objected to what he called the "Great Fallacy" that "the use or threatened use of atomic weapons… would be sufficient to assure the security of the United States and its friends."[22] Instead, Taylor warned that in the approaching "era of atomic plenty [and] mutual deterrence, the Communists will probably be inclined to expand

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[15] Michael O'Hanlon, *The Senkaku Paradox: Risking Great Power War Over Small Stakes* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), p. 8.

[16] See Paul Bernstein and Austin Long, "Multi-Domain Deterrence: Some Framing Considerations," in Brad Roberts, ed., *Getting the Multi-Domain Challenge Right*, *Right* (Livermore: Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, 2021), pp. 6-15.

[17] Brad Roberts, "Introduction," in Brad Roberts, ed., *Getting the Multi-Domain Challenge Right*, op. cit., p. 4.

[18] This summary draws on John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 125-161.

[19] John Foster Dulles, *Evolution of Foreign Policy* (Washington: Department of State, 1954).

[20] Cited in Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 183.

[21] Brian McAllister Linn, *Elvis' Army: Cold War GIs and the Atomic Battlefield* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 86.

[22] Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 4.

their tactics of subversion and limited aggression."[23] In such a world, the United States required a "capability to react across the entire spectrum of possible challenge" because it is "just as necessary to deter or win quickly a limited war as to deter general war."[24] After all, he argued, limited aggression "if resisted with inadequate means… may expand into the general war that we are most anxious to avoid."[25]

Taylor's critique of the New Look was parochial but compelling. As the dissolution of Europe's colonial empires gained speed in the 1950s, the Third World took on a major role as a domain for subversion and brushfire wars. The United States' edge in atomic forces did not offer clear advantages for such circumstances, nor was it clear that massive retaliation provided a credible response to limited aggression directed at such flashpoints as Berlin, South Korea, or Taiwan. Such concerns were shared by civilian defense intellectuals like Henry Kissinger, who observed that the New Look risked cornering the United States into a "Maginot mentality" in which Washington would not "run the risk of a general war for anything less than to counter a direct attack on the United States."[26] As the decade progressed, the Soviet Union's acquisition of thermonuclear weapons and the intercontinental ballistic missiles with which to deliver them suggested that deterrence was not just being eroded in the "grey areas," as Kissinger described them, but from the high-technology heavens, as well.

The benefits of possessing a sufficient "capability to react across the entire spectrum of possible challenge," as Taylor urged, is as compelling today as it was almost seventy years ago. Using language that Taylor could have drafted, participants at a 2017 workshop on integrated strategic deterrence argued that "effective deterrence of high-end conflict cannot be separated from effective deterrence at the lower end."[27] As another workshop participant observed, however, the benefits of integrating the instruments of deterrence are "simple to articulate [but] will be difficult to realize, not least because the 'intellectual homework' needed to lay the foundation for operationalizing integrated strategic deterrence remains to be done."[28] The Army's attempt to operationalize Taylor's vision of deterrence during the 1950s indicates how wide a gap can separate a concept from its execution.

The Rise and Fall of the Pentomic Army

Faced with severe budgetary restraints and the need to prepare for a wide range of contingencies, Taylor sought during the 1950s to build a "dual-capable" Army that possessed

[23] Ibid., p. 33.

[24] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[25] Ibid., p. 35.

[26] Henry A. Kissinger, "Military Policy and Defense of 'Grey Areas,'" *Foreign Affairs* 33:3 (1955), p. 417.

[27] See *Exploring the Requirements of Integrated Strategic Deterrence: A Workshop Report* (Livermore: Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, 2017).

[28] Paul Bernstein, "Toward an Integrated Strategic Deterrent," in Brad Roberts, ed., *Fit For Purpose? The U.S. Strategic Posture in 2030 and Beyond* (Livermore: Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, 2020), p. 77.

"the built-in capability to use atomic and non-atomic weapons in any combination."[29] Taylor proposed the "pentomic" reorganization of Army divisions, replacing the three legacy regiments per division with five, far smaller but self-contained "battle groups" that could disperse or concentrate at will on the atomic battlefield. Taylor, who had commanded the 101st Airborne Division during the Second World War, wrote that "all Army units must be trained for all-around combat in the same way that we trained and fought our airborne divisions in WWII," with ground commanders prepared to find the enemy and "destroy him by directing atomic fire upon him, using his own organic weapons or calling down the fire of distant missiles deployed in the rear."[30] In this conception, tactical nuclear weapons were "viewed not as small-scale strategic bombs, but as artillery of unprecedented effectiveness."[31]

The pentomic era saw a flood of debate and concept development regarding atomic warfare. Between 1955 and 1959, when Taylor served as Chief of Staff, 132 articles in *Military Review* addressed nuclear combat, more than in the rest of the period between 1945 and 1980 combined.[32] Army officers "questioned the size of area of which units would operate; questioned organization, tactics, techniques, and survival on the atomic battlefield; questioned the role of infantry, artillery, armor, and airborne forces; questioned the relationship between ground and air forces and between ground forces in front in rear."[33] These debates were not just theoretical, as the decade saw the fielding of such weapons systems as the nuclear-capable 280mm M-65 field gun, better known as the "Atomic Annie," and the "Davy Crockett" recoilless gun that launched a projectile with a yield with just one tenth of one percent of the Hiroshima bomb. These short-range systems were paired with longer range nuclear-armed rockets like the "Honest John" and "Corporal."

Despite this flourishing of activity, exercises designed to test atomic warfighting concepts indicated the difficulties that the Army faced. Exercise SAGEBRUSH, held at Ft. Polk in 1955, indicated that a large-scale tactical nuclear exchange with the Warsaw Pact "would have destroyed the army forces and killed most if not all inhabitants of Louisiana."[34] The following year, the referees for NATO's CARTE BLANCE field training exercise concluded that the exchange of 355 atomic weapons would have resulted in almost two million West German civilian casualties.[35] It was impossible to know how a war fought with tactical nuclear weapons would progress, but such results provided fodder for those who believed it would be a brief segue to an all-out exchange of strategic nuclear forces.

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[29] A.J. Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era: The U.S. Army Between Korea and Vietnam* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1986), p. 63.

[30] Taylor, quoted in John P. Rose, *The Evolution of U.S. Army Nuclear Doctrine 1945-1980* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), p. 63.

[31] Bacevich, op. cit., pp. 64-66.

[32] Rose, op. cit., p. 57.

[33] Ibid, p. 56.

[34] Ingo Trauschweizer, *Maxwell Taylor's Cold War: From Berlin to Vietnam* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2019), op. cit., p. 69.

[35] Linn, op. cit., p. 225.

The difficulties extended to basic questions of organization and operations. The 101st Airborne Division lost 5,600 officers and men when reorganized along pentomic lines. Although it gained rocket launchers, the division lost its 155-mm howitzers in the exchange, leaving it undermanned and lacking an essential fire support asset for non-nuclear, combined arms combat.[36] When tested in a field training exercise, another pentomic division headquarters was paralyzed as it tried to process 22,000 messages a day.[37] The M-65 Atomic Annie required hours to emplace and was an inviting target for counterbattery fire.[38] The Davy Crockett proved deadly to the careers of officers to whom it was assigned, as the additional classroom training and storage requirements associated with the weapon system prevented participation in field exercises.[39] Finally, the transition to atomic age equipment exceeded the technical aptitude of many soldiers in a conscript-based Army, creating a dilemma that one general officer tersely described: "Push button trucks may be easier for idiots to operate, but they require geniuses to maintain."[40]

As convincing as Taylor's critique of the New Look may have been, the Army was simply unable to implement his proposed alternative during the 1950s. Whether or not the Army could have resolved the doctrinal, weapons, and personnel problems presented by tactical nuclear warfighting or the "pentomic" division, the United States would pivot away from both concepts in the 1960s.

The Pitfalls of Flexible Response

During the 1960 presidential election, John F. Kennedy embraced Maxwell Taylor's critique of the New Look and his "Flexible Response" rubric as an alternative.[41] Although Taylor was recruited into the White House as a military adviser in 1961, the Kennedy administration rejected the pentomic division and Taylor's vision for tactical nuclear warfighting. The administration's theory of nuclear deterrence focused instead on "mov[ing] from the 'spasm' notion to the notion of controlled response"[42] in which the United States could rely on limited, nuclear strikes followed by negotiating pauses to restore intra-war deterrence and end a crisis or conflict on acceptable terms.[43] The military's general purpose force would focus on non-nuclear warfighting, as well as developing the counterinsurgency capabilities

[36] Trauschweizer, op. cit., p. 83.

[37] Ibid., p. 225.

[38] Linn, op. cit., p. 105.

[39] Ibid., p. 111.

[40] Ibid., pp. 99, 124, 144.

[41] John F. Kennedy, "Special Address to Congress on the Defense Budget," March 28, 1961; available at https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-the-defense-budget.

[42] "Memorandum of Conversation Between Kaysen and Rowen," May 25, 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963,* Volume XIII, National Security Policy, David W. Mabon, ed. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2018), Document 28. (Henceforth, all volumes will be cited as FRUS.).

[43] Kaplan, op. cit., p. 273.

required for brushfire wars.[44] Responsibility for these efforts fell to Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, who would soon encounter practical roadblocks echoing some of those Taylor had found in the preceding decade.

The administration's early nuclear strategy efforts culminated in McNamara's May 1962 speech at a NATO ministerial meeting in Athens, Greece, where he described U.S. preparations to carry out "a controlled and flexible nuclear response in the event that deterrence should fail."[45] In Athens, McNamara described three corollaries that would extend Flexible Response to NATO: (1) building up conventional forces so as not to be compelled to "initiate the use of nuclear forces" in response to a limited Soviet attack; (2) rejecting France's plan to deploy what McNamara disparaged as "weak nuclear capabilities, operating independently;" and, (3) minimizing reliance on tactical nuclear weapons, except as a "next-to-last option" given the likelihood of escalation to a general nuclear war.[46] McNamara argued that Flexible Response offered NATO a seamless web of deterrent capabilities, reliant first on conventional forces and backstopped by U.S. theater, and ultimately, strategic nuclear forces. His vision soon proved to be a nightmare for allied assurance.

The Athens speech elicited a neuralgic response from the European allies, who feared that McNamara's emphasis on conventional forces made war more rather than less likely. France, the United Kingdom, and Germany were "unwilling to consider any meaningful 'flexibility' on any use of nuclear weapons except in the context of strategic nuclear exchange… insist[ing] on a concept of 'trip-wire' in which any crossing of a geographic line would automatically trigger 'total nuclear response."[47] Germany's defense minister expressed his concern that a NATO commitment to "meet a conventional attack… with conventional weapons alone was the ideal invitation for an aggressor to attempt such an attack knowing that it would not be as dangerous."[48] To many in Europe, McNamara's approach risked delinking the continent from the U.S. strategic deterrent, rather than enhancing its credibility.

McNamara's critique of France's independent nuclear *force de frappe* was especially ill-received in Paris. Charles De Gaulle argued that "the American emphasis on 'conventional options' and 'pauses' [confirmed] his assessment that the United States would never risk its own cities to defend Europe." The Franco-American recriminations were mutual: National Security Advisor Walt Rostow observed in his memoir that "I have never seen harder faces than those of high American officials reading intelligence reports of Frenchman peddling the doctrine that the *force de frappe* was a cheap finger on the American nuclear trigger."[49]

[44] Rose, op. cit., pp. 76, 93.

[45] "Address by Secretary of Defense McNamara at the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council," May 5, 1962, *FRUS*, *1961-1963*, Volume VIII, op. cit., Document 82.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Jane E. Stromseth, *The Origins of Flexible Response* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1988), pp. 53-54.

[48] Ibid., p. 125.

[49] W.W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), p. 241.

European mistrust of Flexible Response was, in hindsight, well founded. The United States simply had not done the intellectual homework to implement the concept in the 1960s. As early as April 1961, the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned McNamara that "we do not now have the requisite capabilities for carrying out a doctrine of controlled responses and negotiating pauses" and that "attempts at the present time to implement such a doctrine… would be premature and could gravely weaken our deterrent posture."[50] It would not be until the mid-1970s that the Pentagon was able to apply new concepts for the employment of limited nuclear options that were increasingly credible and tailored to desired outcomes.[51] In the interim, McNamara would reject the logic of Athens, lobbying privately for a no-first use posture[52] that he would later endorse publicly.[53] Although Taylor argued for reinvigorating tactical nuclear capabilities and the United States continued to deploy tactical nuclear weapons to Europe, there was little effort to develop new concepts in the face of hostility and disinterest from Washington.[54]

NATO formally endorsed the "Flexible Response" rubric in late 1967, but that move did little to resolve transatlantic mistrust. One relatively sympathetic observer noted that "by asserting the continuity of the conflict spectrum, and grounding deterrence in the risk that any confrontation, however small, might—but need not—escalate to total war, Flexible Response satisfied both European insistence on the centrality of the strategic nuclear deterrence and the U.S. desire to hedge the risk of its use."[55] Dennis Healey of the United Kingdom observed more bluntly that "[n]o-first-use would have been McNamara's objective, whereas the Europeans believed that nuclear deterrence gave deterrence on the cheap."[56] Lawrence Freedman ultimately concluded that the concept's "prime political attribute—that it can mean all things to all men—is a serious military failing."[57]

The unresolved tensions surrounding Flexible Response indeed proved a substantial liability in the latter stages of the Cold War. Allied indecision invited Soviet political warfare in in the "Euromissiles" crisis beginning in the late 1970s, when the Soviet deployment of intermediate-range ballistic missiles pushed NATO's political cohesion to the brink.[58] The episode remains a cautionary tale about the difficulties of extended deterrence and

[50] "Memorandum from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara," *FRUS*, *1961-1963*, Volume VIII, op. cit., Document 25.

[51] For a summary of these breakthroughs, see Keith B. Payne and Matthew R. Costlow, "Back to the Future: U.S. Deterrence Today and the Foster Panel Study," *NIPP Information Series* 565 (October 16, 2023).

[52] Stromseth, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

[53] Robert S. McNamara, "The Military Role of Nuclear Weapons: Perceptions and Misperceptions," *Foreign Affairs* 62:1 (Fall 1983), pp. 59-80.

[54] "Letter from the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the Chairman of the Policy Planning council and Counselor of the Department of State (Rostow)," *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, op. cit., Document 84. For a summary of McNamara's concerns regarding tactical nuclear weapons see "Memorandum from Secretary of Defense McNamara to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer), ibid., Document 86.

[55] Stromseth, op. cit., p. 182.

[56] Ibid, p. 164.

[57] Lawrence Freedman, "NATO Myths," *Foreign Policy* 45 (Winter, 1981-1982), p. 64.

[58] See J. Michael Legge, *Theater Nuclear Weapons and the NATO Strategy of Flexible Response* (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1983).

assurance, even as the Biden administration declares its commitment to the "integration with allies and partners through investments in interoperability."[59]

The Reagan Strategy for Deterrence and Competition

In contrast with the frustrations and false starts described thus far, the Reagan administration stands out for its ability to integrate the instruments of national power in keeping with Ronald Reagan's deceptively simple articulation of Cold War strategy: "we win and they lose."[60] This strategy was spelled out in a pair of National Security Decision Directives, NSDD-32 and NSDD-75, issued in May 1982 and January 1983, respectively. NSDD-32, the "National Security Strategy," called for the "development and integration of… diplomatic, informational, economic/political, and military" strategies, emphasizing that "the national security objectives of the United States can be met only if all defense resources are mutually supporting and thoroughly integrated and complement the other elements of U.S. national power."[61] NSDD-75, on "U.S. Relations with the USSR," identified three overarching objectives: "external resistance to Soviet imperialism; internal pressure on the USSR to weaken the sources of Soviet imperialism; and negotiations to eliminate, on the basis of strict reciprocity, outstanding disagreements."[62] Combined, the two documents formed the basis of a "comprehensive strategy… pursuing the Soviet Union's negotiated surrender."[63]

Critically, the Reagan strategy for deterrence and competition with the Soviet Union was not just committed to paper but was executed across the administration. The strategy's fulcrum was a major defense buildup following a decade of budgetary neglect.[64] Having inherited an approximately $150 billion defense budget upon arriving at the Pentagon, the administration grew defense spending by some $20 billion per year through its first term.[65]

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[59] Biden, op. cit., p. 22.

[60] Quoted in William Inboden, *The Peacemaker: Ronald Reagan, the Cold War, and the World on the Brink* (New York: Dutton, 2022), p. 22. Despite the evident simplicity of this strategy, Reagan's view was crafted over the course of hundreds of speeches that he wrote by hand and delivered during the 1980s. Richard Pipes, a Harvard professor who served as Reagan's top Russia expert, concluded from his time in the White House that Reagan "understood very well—intuitively rather than intellectually—the fundamental weaknesses of the Soviet regime." See Karon K. Skinner et al., eds, *Reagan in His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan that Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001). See also Richard Pipes, *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 193.

[61] Ronald Reagan, "National Security Decision Directive-32," May 20, 1982; available at https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-32.pdf.

[62] Ronald Reagan, "National Security Decision Directive-75," January 17, 1983; available at https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-75.pdf.

[63] Inboden, *The Peacemaker*, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

[64] Greg Schneider and Renae Merle, "Reagan's Defense Buildup Bridged Military Eras," *The Washington Post*, June 9, 2004; available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/business/2004/06/09/reagans-defense-buildup-bridged-military-eras/ec621466-b78e-4a2e-9f8a-50654e3f95fa/.

[65] Department of Defense, "Casper W. Weinberger," https://history.defense.gov/Multimedia/Biographies/Article-View/Article/571286/caspar-w-weinberger/.

This surge of funding would be wasted without a guiding vision, which as stated in NSDD-75, was to "modernize its military forces—both nuclear and conventional—so that… Soviet calculations of possible war outcomes under any contingency must always result in outcomes so unfavorable to the USSR that there would be no incentive for Soviet leaders to initiate an attack."[66]

The modernization of intercontinental and theater nuclear forces were the administration's "first priority"[67] and one of its most hard-fought issues before the first Pershing II missiles were deployed to Europe in 1983 and Congress funded the Peacekeeper ICBM in early 1985.[68] Even more dramatic was Reagan's announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in March 1983, which proposed a radical shift from "the threat of instant U.S. retaliation to deter a Soviet attack" to a missile shield for the United States and its allies.[69] The SDI has been characterized as the "apotheosis" of the Reagan defense buildup, since it demonstrated the U.S. "capability to overmatch the Kremlin's quantitative edge in troops, tanks, aircraft, missiles, and ships."[70] No aspect of the Reagan strategy more dramatically "highlighted the Soviet Union's lag in computers and microelectronics."[71]

During the 1980s, the United States paired its technological edge with novel operational concepts in order to strengthen the contribution of conventional forces to deterrence. The Army and Air Force's major contribution to this effort was the development of the AirLand Battle concept, which relied on a combination of intelligence, surveillance, long-range artillery, and tactical air support required to "extend the battlefield" and destroy Soviet second echelon forces before they could reach the front line along the intra-German frontier.[72] Although Airland Battle sought to substitute conventional forces for an interdiction role that was previously viewed as the domain of battlefield nuclear weapons, it allowed NATO to field and exercise plausible capabilities for doing so.[73] Such efforts contrast well to largely aspirational adoption of Flexible Response in 1967.

[66] NSDD-75, p. 2.

[67] See Reagan, NSDD-32, op. cit., p. 5.

[68] See Susan Colburn, *Euromissiles: The Nuclear Weapons that Nearly Destroy NATO* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2022). See also Inboden, *The Peacemaker*, op. cit., p. 316.

[69] Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security," March 23, 1983; available at https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-defense-and-national-security. Reagan's rational for SDI is highly debated, and it seems to have drawn upon a combination of technological optimism, the value of a selective missile defense capability if deterrence failed, and Reagan's profound abhorrence of the threat of nuclear war. For a discussion of these influences see, inter alia, Inboden, pp. 201-204; Fred Kaplan, *The Bomb: Presidents, Generals and the Secret History of Nuclear War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), pp. 152-154; and Keith B. Payne, *The Great American Gamble: Deterrence Theory and Practice from the Cold War to the Twenty-First Century* (Fairfax: National Institute Press, 2008), pp. 166-170.

[70] Inboden, *The Peacemaker*, op. cit., p. 205.

[71] Thomas Mahnken, "Arms Competition, Arms Control, and Strategies of Peacetime Competition from Fisher to Reagan," in Hal Brands, ed., *The New Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), p. 862.

[72] Mike Guardia, *Crusader: General Donn Starry and the Army of His Times* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2018), pp. 152-153. For the depth of Army and Air Force cooperation, see David E. Johnson, *Shared Problems: The Lessons of AirLand Battle and the 31 Initiatives for Multi-Domain Battle* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2018).

[73] For additional insight on the development of AirLand Battle, see John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982* (Fort Monroe: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1984) and

For its part, the U.S. Navy sought to transform itself during the 1980s into an offensive striking force that would hold Soviet ballistic missile submarine bastions in the Barents Sea and Sea of Japan at risk.[74] This effort culminated in the "Maritime Strategy" implemented by Secretary of the Navy John Lehman. The distinct value of Lehman's approach was described by a Maritime Strategy acolyte: "One of the messages we intended to send was—you will never get to your missile launch point. And that's deterrence!"[75] A senior official in Moscow agreed with that assessment, noting that the Maritime Strategy compelled the Soviet Navy to re-task its "attack submarines to defend the strategic ones in the Barents Sea" rather than stalk U.S. carriers and strategic missile submarines as prescribed in its preferred strategy.[76]

Concurrently, the Reagan administration worked toward the NNSD-32 goal of employing "the other elements of U.S. national power" beyond the military. Unlike the 1950s and 1960s, when the Soviet Union backed the anti-colonial insurgencies throughout the Third World, the USSR was the world's foremost imperial power in the 1980s. The United States backed anti-communist guerillas from Angola and Afghanistan, which Moscow spent billions of dollars each year to suppress.[77] The CIA struck at the heart of the Soviet empire through the provision of covert funding and non-lethal support to the anti-Soviet opposition in Poland.[78] Washington also engaged in economic warfare, tightening the sanctions regime on Moscow while purposefully allowing sabotaged equipment to slip through the cracks.[79]

The Reagan strategy imposed unrelenting pressure on Moscow that eventually compelled Mikhail Gorbachev to fulfill the NSDD-75 vision of a Soviet leader who was willing to retire from the Cold War. In pursuit of that outcome, the interagency created dilemmas that fostered doubt in Moscow that conflict could result any outcome but one "so unfavorable to the USSR that there would be no incentive for Soviet leaders to initiate an attack." Moreover, it worked to dictate the pace by which the competition would take place in the gray zones and new domains by through for anti-Soviet movements and fielding new systems that made the most of the United States' qualitative military edge. And comprehensiveness of the Reagan buildup allowed the administration to avoid relying too much on any one capability for deterrence.

Benjamin M. Jensen, *Forging the Sword: Doctrinal Change in the U.S. Army* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), especially Chapter 3.

[74] Narushige Michishita, et al., *Lessons of the Cold War in the Pacific: U.S. Maritime Strategy, Crisis Prevention, and Japan's Role* (Washington: Wilson Center, 2015), p. 4. See also Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, op. cit., pp. 52-56.

[75] Admiral James Lyons, quoted in Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, op. cit., p. 73.

[76] Dr. Vitaly Tsygichko, an analyst on the Soviet General Staff, quoted in Ibid., p. 145.

[77] Inboden, *The Peacemaker*, op. cit., pp. 317-319.

[78] Ibid., pp. 178-179. See also Seth G. Jones, *A Covert Action: Reagan, the CIA, and the Cold War Struggle in Poland* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018).

[79] Mahnken, "Strategies of Arms Competition," op. cit., p. 863.

Conclusion

The successes and shortcomings of integrated deterrence's Cold War predecessors suggests a range of lessons that the policy community should bear in mind as it tries to work out the "intellectual homework" associated with deterrence today.

First, policymakers should mind the gap that can separate the identification of a deterrence challenge from its resolution. Despite Taylor's experimentation during the 1950s, the Army could not produce a convincing theory of tactical nuclear warfighting to offset the Soviet Union's quantitative strength. Despite the efforts of McNamara and his whiz kid advisors in the early 1960s, U.S. nuclear command and control (NC2) technology of the time was simply unable "to satisfy the functional requirements of Flexible Response."[80] Even as the United States fielded improved NC2 systems in the 1970s and the conventional warfighting breakthroughs associated with Airland Battle in the 1980s, it was unlikely that Moscow would join Washington in foreswearing the early, large-scale use of tactical nuclear weapons during wartime.[81] The United States should expect to grapple with the deterrence challenges it faces today for many years to come.

Second, successful efforts at integrated deterrence are likely to be additive rather than substitutive in nature. Much of the Reagan administration's success during 1980s can be attributed its wide-ranging effort to present the Red Army and its political leadership with dilemmas as Washington simultaneously modernized its nuclear and conventional forces, as well as he doctrines according to which they would fight. These efforts were complemented by political and economic warfare initiatives. The strategy was enabled by Reagan's willingness to fight for the necessary resource and engage in fundamental debates about defense and deterrence. Despite the purportedly bipartisan conviction that the United States faces a period of reinvigorated great power competition, there is too little appetite in Washington to contemplate a similar effort today.

Third, and more pointedly, Washington must avoid undermining its extended deterrence and assurance posture. For most of the post-Cold War period, a relatively benign security environment in which the United States enjoyed conventional military superiority allowed the United States to attempt and reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in its strategy.[82] Those conditions no longer prevail. Although President Biden and other officials in his administration have previously advocated for "no-first use" policy,[83] the integrated deterrence concept should not serve as a backdoor to one. Such a development would risk

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[80] L. Wainstein et al., *The Evolution of U.S. Strategic Command and Control and Warning, 1945-1972* (Arlington: Institute for Defense Analyses), p. 293.

[81] See Rose, op. cit, Chapter 7, as well as William R. Van Cleave and S.T. Cohen, *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: An Examination of the Issues* (London: MacDonald and Jane's, 1978).

[82] Lawrence Freedman and Jeffrey Michaels, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), p. 549.

[83] Fred Kaplan, *The Bomb: Presidents, Generals, and the Secret History of Nuclear War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), pp. 229-231. See also The White House, "Remarks by the Vice President on Nuclear Security," January 11, 2017; available at https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/12/remarks-vice-president-nuclear-security.

harming the credibility of U.S. nuclear deterrence and assurance, thus increasing the risks of both deterrence failure and nuclear proliferation.

Fourth, any theory of deterrence can only bear so much. The United States could not and will not be able to deter every instance of subversion gray zone aggression. Rather, it requires the capability of defeating such activities with the hope of conditioning adversary behavior in the future. It was in this spirit that participants at a 2017 workshop on integrated strategic deterrence cautioned against "expanding the deterrence problem set" when "what is required is a *more selective* approach to defining deterrence tasks" against "those problems for which it is most clearly suitable and against which it is most likely to be effective."[84] Moreover, any deterrence strategy must be nested within a strategy for long-term competition against America's adversaries, but should not be confused for one.[85]

"Integrated deterrence" may be approaching its end as a headline-making rubric. Like the more than 60-year-old concept of "flexible response," however, the concept speaks to the need to deter and compete with adversaries who threaten U.S. interests through an ever-evolving combination of domains and means. Contemporary policymakers will do well to revisit the successes and failures of their forebears as they face the challenges ahead.

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[84] *Exploring the Requirements of Integrated Strategic Deterrence*, op. cit., p. 2.

[85] This point is made by Christine M. Leah et al., "Integrated Deterrence: Grand Strategy's Poor Cousin?", *RealClearDefense*, December 31, 2022; available at https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2022/12/31/integrated_deterrence_grand_strategys_poor_cousin_873155.html.