

To Col. Lejeune

Intended

SECURITY WILL NOT WAIT

By MAXWELL D. TAYLOR

Reprinted from

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AN AMERICAN QUARTERLY REVIEW



January 1961

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AN AMERICAN QUARTERLY REVIEW

JANUARY 1961

The Slender Margin of Safety	<i>Sir Anthony Eden</i>
Security Will Not Wait	<i>Maxwell D. Taylor</i>
The French Army in Politics	<i>Jean-Marie Domenach</i>
The Means Short of War	<i>Willy Brandt</i>
After Detection—What?	<i>Fred Charles Iklé</i>
Italy After One Hundred Years	<i>Clare Boothe Luce</i>
West Africa in Evolution	<i>Léopold Sédar Senghor</i>
New Economic Policies for the West	<i>Alfred C. Neal</i>
India on the Eve of Its Third Plan	<i>Barbara Ward Jackson</i>
Planning in Foreign Affairs	
The State of the Art	<i>George Allen Morgan</i>
The Missing Element	<i>Franklin A. Lindsay</i>
The Coming Showdown in Central Africa..	<i>N. M. Shamuyarira</i>
The Orthodox Church in Soviet Russia	<i>Paul B. Anderson</i>
Strategic Development in Sinkiang	<i>A. R. Field</i>
Recent Books on International Relations ...	<i>Henry L. Roberts</i>
Source Material	<i>Donald Wasson</i>

HAMILTON FISH ARMSTRONG

Editor

PHILIP W. QUIGG

Assistant Editor

Editorial Advisory Board

ALLEN W. DULLES	WILLIAM L. LANGER	PHILIP E. MOSELY
ALFRED M. GRUENTHER	JOHN J. McCLOY	ISIDOR I. RABI
GEORGE F. KENNAN		HENRY M. WRISTON

58 East 68th Street • New York 21, N. Y.
Subscriptions, \$6.00 a year, post free to any address.

Copyright, 1960 Council on Foreign Relations, Inc.
PRINTED IN U. S. A.

SECURITY WILL NOT WAIT

By Maxwell D. Taylor

IN the recent Presidential election, national defense per se did not become a major campaign issue. Both candidates expressed confidence in our present military strength but recognized the probability that larger military expenditures would be required in the future. The issue was also present in the background of many debates on foreign policy and was very much a part of questions asked about the state of our world-wide prestige.

Mr. Kennedy, the President-elect, was particularly explicit in stating his belief that Soviet military power is growing faster than our own. He has also recognized the importance of balanced strength capable of coping with any form of military threat. He has indicated something less than confidence in our defense organization and has shown an intention to initiate substantial changes, including a reorientation of strategy.

As one who has long urged a reappraisal of military policy and strategy, I can only applaud this intention of the new Administration to come to grips with the many fundamental problems involved in strengthening our national defense. I have one important reservation, however, and that has to do with the time factor. Having lived through some of the defense reorganizations of the past—all of them far less comprehensive than the next one should be—I would expect that the most competent minds in the Government will feel the need for months and even years of planning and work to bring about all the necessary changes.

Even if the new policy-makers are imbued with the utmost sense of urgency, they are certain to find many cogent reasons for proceeding slowly before taking important decisions. Quite properly, they will want to be sure of their facts; the Pentagon briefings will be many. They will soon discover—if they do not already know—the defects in our strategy-making machinery in the National Security Council and the Department of Defense and may decide to improve the machine before asking it to produce. They may want to return to fundamentals and establish national aims before trying to decide on a military strategy which in all logic should be designed to support those aims. These are

all perfectly good reasons for prudent men to take time out before setting about important changes.

But the fact is that, important as these considerations are, action on our military situation cannot wait long upon them. The Pentagon can never close down for general repairs. The requirements of security bear inexorably upon us, demanding prompt solutions. The military trend is running against us and decisive measures are needed to reverse it. Any long-term reappraisal of military policy and strategy-making should be paralleled by immediate actions based on present conviction and available knowledge—actions which, at the same time, will be consistent with the likely outcome of any comprehensive review of national policy. This is the only way to telescope the lead-time of military planning and execution into acceptable dimensions.

Under these conditions, the policy-makers of the new Administration will find themselves at the outset in a situation far from ideal but, I believe, not impossible. It is the theme of this article that planning and decision can proceed if there is agreement on certain basic principles which can be given to the military planners for guidance in initiating a new military program. There is no lack of competent professionals of all services capable of taking such a statement of principles, analyzing its implications and giving it the expanded expression necessary to set the wheels in motion throughout the Pentagon. The staffs of the Joint Chiefs and of the services have been wrestling with most of these problems for years, often in disagreement among themselves but ready to proceed in any reasonable direction clearly indicated by responsible civilian leadership. They will move promptly now if they receive the basic guidance.

What are the principles which need to be asserted and accepted as the platform for a new military program? The most obvious one, perhaps, is that world conditions have changed drastically since the adoption of the so-called New Look in 1953 and its supporting strategy of massive retaliation, and that a new program is needed which will take the changes into account. Such a program needs to be based on a flexible military strategy designed to deter war, large or small, and to assist the West in winning the cold war.

It is hardly necessary to emphasize for the benefit of the military planners that deterrence is the primary objective of all our military efforts. There has been little argument on this score in the

past although for a time there were proponents of the thesis that ability to deter general atomic war carried with it the ability to deter all war. Apparently this fallacy has largely subsided; but in making a new start the policy-makers should affirm unambiguously the need to prepare specifically for limited and cold war as well as for general war.

The planners will readily understand the decision to face up to the problem of limited war. Plans are on file in the Pentagon, unapproved thus far largely for fiscal reasons, covering the requirements of such things as the modernization and expansion of forces needed in limited war, the requirements of airlift to give mobility to these forces and organizational changes to improve their readiness. These plans can be brought up to date and presented for consideration in comparatively short order.

The need for specific consideration of cold-war requirements may require spelling out in some detail. The military view has generally been that over-all strength in being is the main contribution which the Armed Forces can make on the cold front. This is undoubtedly true, but there is a relatively unexplored field of possibilities in relating military strategy and armament to the reaction of allies, neutrals and potential enemies.

Nor should the planners be put to work without some guiding comments on the economic factor. While no one seems inclined in the present atmosphere to place a dollar limit on security, they should be reminded of the economic facts of life and warned against assuming unlimited resources for their military program. It will have to compete with the requirements of many other national programs directed at goals other than security and must therefore be able to withstand hard scrutiny by the fiscal powers. It can do so only if it is based on verifiable military requirements with a demonstrable relation to the deterrence or winning of war—cold, limited or general. The planners should be prepared to make such a defense of their eventual recommendations.

Once the planners have received a few basic decisions and made some common-sense assumptions which will remain valid in the course of any long-term reappraisal, they can press ahead with reasonable assurance of being pointed in the right direction. I have no doubt that the resulting effort will produce many stresses and strains within the military staffs involved; but that will be inevitable no matter how much time is devoted to preliminaries. Although it may be rash to prejudge the outcome of

this pragmatic approach, the program would seem to me to require provision for the following principal elements:

(a) An invulnerable, long-range missile force with a second-strike capability, *i.e.* the ability to inflict crippling damage on an enemy even after absorbing a surprise nuclear attack.

(b) Adequate and properly equipped mobile forces to cope with limited war, *i.e.* conflicts short of general atomic war between the two nuclear power blocs.

(c) An effective system of alliances.

(d) Procedures for assuring the most effective use of the resources committed to the program.

If called upon to justify the need for these elements, the planners could advance the following reasons and explanations:

The purpose of preparations for general atomic war is to assure that no such war will ever be fought. In all probability this purpose can be achieved provided there is an approximate balance of destructive capability between the two power blocs which will make the deliberate choice of general atomic war unthinkable to either.

There is such a balance today, but it is becoming unstable. It has already begun to incline in favor of the Soviets because of our lag in developing a reliable, protected missile system. Consequently, the security program which we are designing now must stress as a matter of urgency the achievement of such a system to restore the stability which is being lost. To do this, we need a missile system with the characteristics of reliability, immediate readiness for launching and protection from surprise attack.

To enjoy this security against surprise attack, our new missiles need the attributes—singly or in combination—of mobility, concealment and “hardening” of their bases. Major launching areas should have the protective cover of an active anti-missile defense such as that which the Nike-Zeus anti-missile would afford. To avoid the needless destruction of centers of population, all launching sites should be far removed from our cities. The Polaris submarine-launched missile, when operational, will have all of these characteristics whereas our present land-based operational missiles have virtually none of them.

While we are often inclined to stress numbers in our efforts to close the missile gap, we usually fail to recognize the importance of the defensive elements of a “second-strike” missile system. Actually, a few hundred reliable long-range missiles are all we

need, provided they are invulnerable to surprise attack. Complete invulnerability will never be attained; but if we employ all the defensive measures mentioned above in intelligent combination we shall have a reasonable expectation of possessing enough missiles to survive a surprise attack and of still being able to strike a crippling blow in retaliation. That is to say, we will have achieved a "second-strike" capability.

One can hardly overstress the need for an anti-missile missile for the tight defense of a limited number of vital areas. In an emergency, such a weapon would allow us to hold our retaliatory fire until we were sure that we were truly under hostile attack, secure in the knowledge that essential government controls would survive, that communications would continue and that most of our protected missiles could still get off the ground and onto target. The United States has been woefully remiss in not pressing the production of the Nike-Zeus missile in order to obtain this critical advantage. We may expect any day to find that the Soviet Union has beaten us to such a weapon and has thus gained a vital technical and psychological victory.

The second element of our security program—adequate and properly equipped mobile forces to cope with limited war—is of equal importance with the invulnerable atomic missile force. Unless we find reason to believe that the Soviet bloc has renounced the use of all forms of military force to achieve its ends, the need for such a mobile force must increase as the danger of a planned atomic aggression by the Soviet Union recedes in the face of our visible readiness to retaliate in kind. But, despite the clear evidence of the increased danger of limited war, the United States has deliberately restrained the development of "adequate and properly equipped mobile forces" in its preoccupation with meeting the ever-increasing cost of weapons for general war.

Our weakness in this field has been obscured by the fact that there has never been an agreed procedure for determining what forces are needed for limited war. The fact is that we have undertaken military commitments to more than 40 nations without having established a procedure for verifying that our military capabilities have a reasonable chance of meeting these obligations if they fall due.

Apart from the unsettled question of size, there is the problem of modernizing the equipment of limited-war forces. The Army's financial requirement for modernizing its equipment has been

estimated at about \$3 billion a year for five years. There is a corresponding bill for the modernization of those portions of the Air Force, Navy and Marines which could be used in limited war. No such funds have been forthcoming. As it is, the Army is still supplied largely with World War II equipment and has not been able to afford the improved ground and air mobility obtainable from equipment which has since become available. Further, very little urgency has been given to the production of very low-yield atomic weapons, the only kind likely to be used in limited war.

While the tactical mobility of our limited war forces leaves much to be desired, it is in the field of strategic movement that we need to make a major effort. The aircraft at present available for troop lift are obsolete and inadequate in numbers; they are not prepared to move significant numbers of troops on short notice. Our security planners will have to give much thought to this need for strategic mobility of ground forces in limited war. They will have to reconcile the considerable cost of a replacement program for obsolete transport aircraft with the financial demands of other parts of this program. They may well conclude that the stockpiling of heavy military equipment in certain strategic points about the world will promote both economy and rapidity of military reaction.

Since World War II we have come to recognize the global nature of our security problems and the consequent need for effective allies joined to us by common goals and interests. We have long since abandoned the idea of "going it alone." An adequate security program, then, should have the collateral effect of strengthening our alliances, reducing the causes for disagreement and division among us, and enhancing the confidence of our friends in us and in themselves.

To achieve these results, we need to make our commitments to our allies only after careful thought, but then in unambiguous language. A vague promise to help "in accordance with our Constitutional provisions" or similar terms is not very encouraging to a country living on the Communist periphery, thousands of miles from the United States. But even explicit promises will not suffice unless the military preparations of the United States show clearly an ability to come quickly with help of a sort which will save and not destroy an ally in danger. Hence the need for the "adequate and properly equipped mobile forces" which our security planners have placed high on their priority list. Properly

equipped, from the point of view of threatened allies, means without complete dependence on the use of atomic weapons, particularly of those with an indiscriminate capacity for mass destruction—the very contemplation of which may make surrender seem less terrible than rescue through their use. Thus a prerequisite for our limited-war forces is a capability for prolonged combat *without* the use of atomic weapons.

The self-confidence of our allies will depend upon their ability to defend themselves, at least long enough for our help to arrive. The primary purpose of a military aid program should be to provide the means to establish this self-confidence. Our planners should verify that all military aid which they recommend will contribute to this purpose, bearing in mind that there will never be enough to go around for all claimants.

In seeking to strengthen our alliances, the security planners will recognize that a frequent cause for friction between us and our allies is the presence of American bases and garrisons on their soil. Particularly, bomber and missile bases for use in general atomic war are increasingly unwelcome, as Khrushchev rattles his missiles and threatens to direct them against those targets. Our ground forces are somewhat more popular abroad as they promise help with conventional weapons and afford day-to-day evidence of our willingness to share with our friends the hazards of living under the Communist guns. Nevertheless, they too provide their share of local incidents to upset normal relations abroad. The fact is that our overseas deployments are very expensive and the number should be progressively reduced as they lose military justification.

As a matter of policy, our security program should require an annual review of the overseas bases and a defense of their continued necessity by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As our long-range missiles based in the United States and at sea achieve reliability, the need for overseas bases for bombers and missiles tends to disappear. Likewise, when we have limited war forces properly trained and equipped for rapid strategic movement, the purely military need for overseas garrisons at present strengths will also diminish. Our policy on this subject should be clearly and openly stated, and the withdrawal of forces should be undertaken voluntarily well in advance of the development of local pressures.

II

Using these arguments, our military planners might justify to their civilian superiors the implementation of a new military program to meet the changing balance of world power. If their views were generally accepted, the planners would then be asked for an estimate of costs. This would bring out the long-standing defects in our system for formulating the defense budget.

The fact is that up to now it has been very difficult to find out what kind of defense the United States has been buying because of the way in which the defense budget is formulated. In spite of the fact that modern war is no longer fought by Army, Navy and Air units acting as separate forces, we none the less still budget vertically in terms of these services. If we were called upon to fight, we would not be interested in the services as such. We would be interested rather in task forces—those combinations of Army, Navy and Air Force which are functional in nature, such as the atomic retaliatory forces, overseas deployments, continental air defense forces, limited-war expeditionary forces and the like. But we do not keep our budget in these terms. Hence, it is not an exaggeration to say that we do not know what kind and how much defense we are buying with any specific budget.

As a matter of fact, it may be argued that we do not know how much defense we have at any given moment. This arises from the fact that there is no appraisal of current war-making capacity as a routine act of the executive branch of the Government. Although we have undertaken many political commitments abroad which carry military implications, there is no accepted procedure for evaluating military strength in being in relation to those obligations. We lack a system of politico-military bookkeeping to assure that commitments and capabilities are kept in balance.

When our policy-makers have come to appreciate the need for revising the method of making our defense budget and for setting up a system of bookkeeping to keep commitments and capabilities in balance, they may feel dismayed and inclined to delay action. My earnest hope is that, as I said earlier, they will realize that they cannot afford to pause to reform and refine procedures. They should be encouraged to do with the procedures they have. On their own initiative, they are quite capable of producing a directive which will provide an adequate base of departure for the future development of the new military program.

Such a directive would at the outset state the premise that the objective of the military preparations of the United States is to create respect for the strength of the United States without arousing fear of its misuse. That respect should be sufficient to deter military attack on the United States and to discourage aggression in any area of its interest. If deterrence fails, our strength should be sufficient to impose appropriate punishment upon the aggressor. In short, our military strength should be such as to impress possible enemies; it also should be such as to encourage friends and neutrals without awakening fears because of the nature of our weapons or the way in which we might use them.

This kind of military strength would consist of two parts. One, as already noted, would consist of the capability for deterring a general atomic attack on the United States and for dealing a crippling second strike against the aggressor if deterrence fails. The weapons system for retaliation would be composed primarily of long-range missiles with atomic warheads, firing from mobile or secure positions removed from centers of population. To add to its deterrent effect as well as its ability to survive, the system would be provided with an active air and anti-missile defense.

Concurrently, and with equal priority of effort, the Department of Defense would be told to organize and train the Armed Forces so that they will have the capability for sustaining combat on the ground and at sea, placing primary reliance on the use of non-atomic weapons. These forces would be assured of strategic and tactical mobility to permit prompt and timely intervention in any area of our vital interest.

In order to assure the execution of these tasks, the Department of Defense will need to redefine the roles and missions of the military services so as to fix clearly the service responsibility for the organization, equipment and training of the forces required. This revision should not be allowed to delay the implementation of other parts of the program.

To support the necessary forces, the directive would authorize the Department of Defense to plan on receiving an annual sum approximating 10 percent of the Gross National Product. It could then prepare annually for the President a five-year military program which would define and justify goals for all categories of operational forces required in this period. Those goals would be based upon the estimated military threat and the extent of our political commitments having military implications.

The directive would also make clear that it is the policy of the United States to continue to furnish military aid to allies on a selective basis related to the strategic requirements of the common defense. However, it would also include the reminder that as the United States missile force grows and the strategic mobility of its limited war forces increases, the United States would, in consultation with its allies, progressively reduce its overseas bases and deployments.

The suggested directive contains more of substance than might seem at first glance. It should be supplemented, of course, by decisions on such matters as the conditions for the use of atomic and chemical weapons, civil defense and the reserves to be maintained in men and materials. It then would produce, with maximum economy, the forces which our planners have determined we must have in order to provide a flexible response to many forms of military threat without dependence on massive retaliation as the primary strategy. With, in addition, an indication of the funds to be expected for defense purposes, in terms of a percentage of the Gross National Product, the Department of Defense would be able to produce a mid-range defense plan for the guidance of the military services.

The proposed directive would impose on the military services a requirement to obtain approval of force goals in terms of operational functions. A joint review by the Secretaries of State and Defense to verify that military forces in being are consistent with current commitments would become an annual event on the calendar of the National Security Council.

But the question may be raised whether such a program if adopted would not launch a new arms race with the Soviet Union and generally aggravate the world situation. Such a question should be answered, I think, in two parts, the first referring to general war and the second to the requirements of limited war.

The technological race with the Soviets to obtain maximum effectiveness in missiles, warheads and space vehicles is going ahead now at full speed and the proposals made here should have little immediate effect on either its pace or direction. I doubt that the Soviets are neglecting anything which might help them maintain the lead which they are generally conceded to have. What would be accomplished on our side would be a better use of resources by the elimination of obsolete bomber and missile systems with their attendant costs and the replacement of them by an

advanced, protected missile system of finite but sufficient size to cover the targets which deterrence requires that we be able to destroy. The ultimate result would be a decrease in the number of delivery vehicles rather than an increase—a form of disarmament which might offer political advantages. Likewise, the new emphasis on the protection of our missiles could be used as evidence of our defensive posture whereas our present unprotected retaliatory force makes no sense except as a first-strike force. I have already alluded to an important factor which works against a race in missile numbers. Each side knows that a limited number of megaton weapons on target will destroy the enemy's war-making capacity. They may disagree as to what that number is, but when each has reached what he estimates to be sufficient, there is no reason to race for more. But the technological race for better quality and for scientific breakthroughs in the weapons field appears to be with us for at least as long as the present world political situation lasts.

Nor can I see that any adverse effect is likely to arise from the effort to improve our limited-war capabilities, apart from the propaganda storm which the Communists will direct at any positive action on our part. The gap between the 175 divisions which the Soviets are usually credited with having and the present 14 United States divisions is too great for legitimate concern on their part over an increase on our side of, say, six divisions. The proposed modernization program is merely a belated effort, following the Soviet pattern, to give our ground forces the best equipment which modern technology affords. To do less is a dangerous omission which is unfair to our soldiers and to those of our allies who will share the hazards of combat on the ground.

From the foregoing discussion I conclude that there is every reason to set out forthwith upon a new military program which will produce with minimum delay forces adequate to meet our commitments and capable of supporting our national objectives. Since these forces would not rely on any one weapons system they would permit a strategy of flexible response and offer our civilian leadership many alternatives in policy and action. These forces should be built, let me emphasize again, without awaiting better guidance and more sophisticated procedures. They are needed at the first possible moment in order to assure that the military power of the United States commands the respect indispensable for the maintenance of the peace.