

Working Papers Series N°30

GREAT POWER RIVALRY IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

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August 1986
draft chapter III:
The Taming of the Great Powers,
Nuclear Weapons and Global Integration
not for quotation.

Contents

1. Struggle for Hegemony
2. The Doublebind: Blaming and Cold War Ideology
 - 2.1 Orthodox interpretations
 - 2.2 Revisionism
 - 2.3 Towards greater detachment?
3. The Doublebind: One-Sided Perception of Threat and its Consequences
 - 3.1 As if conduct and the role of domestic politics and ideology
 - 3.2 Tendencies towards overperception of threat
4. The Nuclear Age: The Development of Mutual Restraint
 - 4.1 Why did the United States make no use of its nuclear monopoly?
 - 4.2 Absolute or Relative? Two perceptions of the role of nuclear weapons.
 - 4.3 Political crisis and the development of the nuclear balance
 - 4.3.1 The nature of crisis in the nuclear age
 - 4.3.2 Crisis and the demarcation of vital interests
 - 4.3.3 The Cuban missile crisis: origin
 - 4.3.4 The Cuban missile crisis: the thirteen days
 - 4.3.5 The Cuban missile crisis: nuclear weapons
 - 4.3.6 The Cuban missile crisis: consequences
 - 4.4 Regulation Principles of Rivalry in the Nuclear Age
5. Conclusions
 - 5.1 Conclusions I: Forces making for mutual restraint
 - 5.2 Conclusions II: The other side of mutual restraint

"I have not assumed that you or any other sane man would, in this nuclear age, deliberately plunge the world into war which is crystal clear no country could win and which could result in catastrophic consequences to the whole world, including the aggressor."

— President Kennedy to chairman Krushchev in his first letter during the Cuban missile crisis.

"Had the (Cuban missile) crisis led to war the next generation of historians, assuming there was one, would have portrayed the crisis and the war that followed as the natural even inevitable result of almost twenty years of Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States."

— Richard Ned Lebow

1. Struggle for Hegemony

The wartime cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States within a few years was transformed into a 'Cold War'. That conflict was the particularly intense first phase of their global rivalry. Though the ideological intensity of the rivalry was very high, the adjective 'cold' already demonstrates the perception of a difference with pre-nuclear times: the conflict between 'East' and 'West' was not supposed to turn into a real, a 'hot' war.

Is it correct to speak of a 'conflict' between East and West as two opposed and hostile social systems? Would the Soviet Union and the United States have remained allies if they would both have been parliamentary democracies? Or would they have been drawn into the traditional rivalry of great powers, though justified in nationalist rather than political-ideological terms?

The analysis of pacification processes in Chapter II has shown that the latter would have been more likely, as the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States is best understood as a struggle for hegemony at the global level. The postwar development of the relations between the two rivals is a continuation of the elimination struggles between attack and defense units that have been waged with great regularity throughout history, in different forms and at an increasingly wide geographical scope. These usually violent struggles have brought about the 'integration' of more and

more people into larger and larger territories. It should be noted, however, that they do not necessarily end with the formation of larger units at a new or 'higher' level of integration. Integration conflicts may also remain undecided or lead to the desintegration of existing units into a larger number of smaller units.

The global rivalry of our time may thus either lead to a durably pacified and globally integrated world or to the unprecedented destruction and desintegration that would follow upon a nuclear war. It may also remain precariously stalemated, as it is now. Can one at present already indicate which of the alternatives is the more likely? It is clear enough that the nuclear revolution has exerted a strong mitigating influence on the conflict conduct of the great powers. But do the continuing nuclear arms race and the many possibilities for uncontrollable crisis situations make it not likely that nuclear weapons will one day be used? Can the fear of nuclear war continue to keep the great powers in check? Does the stalemate not have to end in global destruction? How to assess the nature and direction of development of great power rivalry in the nuclear age? To make such an assessment is the purpose of this chapter.

This chapter is thus neither a history of the rivalry nor an attempt to explain its precise course and fluctuations. It is an analysis both of the salient features of great power rivalry as a doublebind figuration and of the way in which that rivalry has been influenced by the development of nuclear weapons. It will be shown that after 1945 great power rivalry has in fact developed differently than was to be expected from its prenuclear pattern. Though it remains a struggle for hegemony with a coercive force of its own, the coming of the nuclear age has changed its form to what at present is still a peculiar combination of prenuclear thinking and acting about most military, political and ideological aspect of great power relations with conflict and crisis conduct adapted to the realities of the nuclear age. Though great power rivalry still has to be analysed as a doublebind figuration, its character has been mitigated by the shared fear of nuclear war.

2. The Doublebind: Blaming the Cold War Ideology

To see contemporary great power rivalry as an integration conflict - with the ever present threat of nuclear war as a new element - is not yet self-evident or generally accepted. It should become so, however, if the great powers are to conduct themselves in such a manner, that durable prevention

of nuclear war will become possible. But at present there is still a strong tendency, even among scholars, to regard the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union as having arisen and continuing only because of the aggressiveness or expansionism of the opponent, as a one-sided instead of a two-sided affair. The prevailing view of politicians, the military and the public alike is still dominated by the age-old question "who is to blame?". Its answer has remained the same too: "The enemy, not we".¹⁾

Blaming as a means of orientation and of legitimation of one's own conduct is made even easier because great power rivalry is at present still bipolar, though China is waiting patiently to become the third in the league. A power struggle between two opponents can without difficulty be interpreted in a dualistic or manichean perspective: the world as the theatre of the struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. President Reagan once openly stated that the Soviet Union had to be regarded as an 'evil empire'.²⁾ Soviet propaganda does not allow for any doubt either that imperialism is the evil, war-mongering force, whereas the socialist camp represents the good, peace-loving side.

Blaming the opponent, it may be clear, is an aspect of the doublebind nature of great power rivalry, as described in par. 4 of Chapter II. It is a sign of the predominance of emotional and fantasy images over more realistic assessments of the nature of the predicament arising from the 'anarchical' nature of international politics and the coercive force of the struggle for hegemony. The strong influence of blaming upon the way in which great power rivalry is perceived can be demonstrated by an examination of the development of the public debate in the West about the origins and development of the Cold War. Such an analysis can also serve as a survey of the main events that have shaped the postwar rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, between West and East. (Note that it is more common to speak about 'East and West', which implies that 'East' is the initiator and 'West' the defender.)

2.2 Orthodox Interpretations

Until the end of the Sixties the prevailing interpretation of the development of the Cold War contained a unequivocal designation of to what was called 'war guilt' after the First World War.³⁾ The policies of the West - in the conflicts over Poland and Germany, the intervention in the civil war in Greece; the Marshall Plan; the creation of NATO and the rearmament of Germany; the nuclear arms build-up, the military interventions in Korea or Vietnam and so on - had all been reactions to the aggressive intentions and

policies of the Soviet Union. As a communist imperial power the Soviet Union by the nature of its ideology and regime had to aim for world domination.

The basic assumptions of this orthodox interpretation can be formulated as a simple syllogism:

1. Communist states are totalitarian
2. Totalitarian states are inherently aggressive
3. Communist states are aggressive

The Soviet Union used a similar syllogism to maintain public belief in the inherently threatening and evil character of the United States:

1. Capitalist states are imperialist
2. Imperialist states are inherently aggressive
3. Capitalist states are aggressive

'Munich' (the appeasement of Hitler by Chamberlain in 1938) was used all the time on both sides as an analogy to make the second line of the syllogism convincing and to draw conclusions as to the policy to be followed towards the opponent. At the founding meeting of the Cominform in 1947, for example, Zhelanolov declared:

"In exactly the same manner as the Munich policy freed the hands of the Nazi aggressors, any concessions made to the new course of the United States and the imperialist camp could make those who have inspired that policy more impudent and aggressive"⁴⁾

The reasoning in the West was more elaborate. It went as follows:

A totalitarian state with aggressive and expansionist intentions cannot be stopped early enough. To negotiate with such governments and to give in to certain of its demands (appeasement) is of no avail. Totalitarian governments consider compromising conduct as a sign of weakness, as a proof that they can raise and reinforce their demands by demonstrations of military strength. The ultimate aim of the Soviet Union is world revolution. If the Soviet Union pursues a restrained policy for a time, that only means that it does not feel strong enough yet or that expansionist activities would imply too many risks. In such periods the Soviet Union just bides her time.

As Eugene Rostow has written:

"Soviet expansionism has only been stopped by the American threat of reprisal with overwhelming force, but Soviet energy presses outward, patient and ingenious, flowing around obstacles, taking advantage of every opening."⁵⁾

It may be clear that in the logic of this orientation scheme only greater military strength and an alliance between Western countries could prevent the Soviet Union - or China, for that matter - from realising their aggressive and expansionist goals. Containment of Soviet expansionism was thus

seen as an absolute necessity. The strategy of containment, based on the metaphor of constructing a dam against the danger of floods, became in 1947 the explicit basis of American foreign policy. The term 'containment' was first used by George Kennan, who served from 1944 to 1947 as American Minister in Moscow. Following earlier telegrams to the State Department he published under the pseudonym X an article 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct' in the July 1947 issue of Foreign Affairs, which provided the first coherent formulation of the notion of containment:

"The main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long^a term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies ... Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and manoeuvres of Soviet policy."⁶⁾

Containment policy did not remain confined to Europe. The United States extended it to all parts of the globe in which communist expansion might manifest itself, particularly in Asia. Containment policy implies, that if communist states try to reach their aim with violent means, as in Korea or Vietnam, they should be taught the 'lesson' to leave their neighbours alone - such, for example, was the argument with which Dean Rusk as American Secretary of State time and again defended American policy in Vietnam. Only in the context of this orientation scheme does it become understandable that President Johnson justified American military intervention in the Dominican Republic (1965) by showing on television a list of 89 'known communists', which supposedly were responsible for the political unrest in that country.

The orthodox interpretation of the origins and development of the Cold War follow logically from this world view. The Dutch historian H.W. Von der Dunk has summarized that interpretation concisely:

"While the Allied Powers after the war had aimed at creating a new, peaceful and free world order based on the principles of the Atlantic Charter ... the Soviet Union had sabotaged these plans for a better world. It had broken with wartime cooperation, had suppressed democratic development in the countries occupied by the Red Army and pursued an expansionist policy. The aim of its infamous conduct could only be to undermine Western positions as much as possible and make Europe ripe for submission. The West had naively hoped to continue

the cooperation after the war, even though the problems had already begun before the ink on the German Act of Capitulation had dried. The United States continued its large-scale disarmament programme and appeared to prepare a complete withdrawal from Europe. Only gradually did the realisation spread on both sides of the ocean that the Kremlin would profit from that policy to work more successfully towards the realisation of its imperialist aims. Therefore the West began to resist this new totalitarian threat which was even more serious than that of National-Socialism which had just been defeated ... the Cold War was thus the result of this Western answer to the provocation of the Kremlin. That was the interpretation which came up soon after the war, and enjoyed uncontested dominance until the 60's."⁷⁾

The great majority of American and Western European historians and political scientists, and of course the involved politicians when writing their memoirs, ordered their material on the basis of this orientation scheme. As Von der Dunk had added:

"The most important disagreements were about the question whether and how the West could have prevented the growth of Soviet power at an earlier time."

An American textbook which appeared in 1963 - after the Cuban crisis of 1962 and the beginning of more relaxed relations between the United States and the Soviet Union - contained only one dissenting contribution, written in 1960 by Staughton Lynd, who would later become a spokesman for the New Left.⁹⁾ The central question of the book "Is the Cold War an ideological conflict or a power struggle?" was discussed in most contributions only in terms of the motives and intentions of the Soviet Union. Typical titles were 'Russian Imperialism or Communist Aggression?'; 'Communist Ideology: Key to Soviet Policy'; or 'National Interests: Key to Soviet politics?'.⁹⁾

American social science research on the development of the Soviet Union remained guided by such a perspective for a long time - and to some extent still is. In his essay 'Ten Theories in Search of Reality: the prediction of Soviet behaviour', Daniel Bell has discussed the most important theories about the development of the Soviet Union advanced after the Second World War by American sociologists, political scientists and psychiatrists. Bell came to the for him surprising conclusion that none of these theories took any external factors or events into account.¹⁰⁾ In other words, the policies

and development of the United States and Western Europe were supposed to have no impact whatsoever on the development of the Soviet Union. This implies in turn that Soviet policy was seen as exclusively determined by internal factors. And this again justified the assumption that American foreign policy was nothing but a necessary reaction to Soviet policy. The Soviet Union thus bore all the blame for the Cold War.

2.2 Revisionism

Though the improvement in Soviet-American relations after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 did create the conditions for a more detached view of the Cold War, it did not spark off what later came to be called the 'revisionist' literature.¹¹⁾ That emerged and started to be widely discussed when the American intervention in Vietnam became strongly opposed, particularly at the major American universities. When the United States began regular bombings of North Vietnam in February 1965, a so-called teach-in movement spread over these universities. In the 'teach-ins' questions of who was to blame for particular historical events were increasingly emphasized, if only because the American administration defended its Vietnam policy in terms of the conventional interpretation of the Cold War described above. In the contest of arguments about the war in Vietnam which then started, that interpretation began to be questioned too. To oppose American intervention in Vietnam implied a critical examination of the presuppositions on which American foreign policy was based and with which it was justified. The close connection between 'revisionism' and opposition to the American intervention in Vietnam is illustrated by the fact that a number of the most important revisionists, such as Carl Oglesby, Staughton Lynd, David Horowitz and Gabriel Kolko, were at the same time spokesmen of the New Left and the opposition against the war in Vietnam.¹²⁾ This may explain why the discussion about the origins of the Cold War was again dominated by the question to whom (and to some extent also to what) blame or guilt should be attributed. The most pronounced revisionists, such as Gabriel and Joyce Kolko and David Horowitz, constructed an interpretation of the origins of the Cold War which was a mirror image of the conventional view which they so strongly attacked.¹³⁾

In the orthodox interpretation American policy was always conceived as a necessary reaction to the aggressive conduct and intentions of the Soviet Union. In the revisionist vision the policy of the Soviet Union (for example its obstruction of free elections in Poland; the coup d'état in Czechoslovakia, the Berlin blockade; the creation of the Warsaw Pact and so on) were consistently interpreted as a necessary reaction to the aggressive and expansionist policy of the United States. The Dutch historian M.C. Brands has noted that the Kolko's took at face value every Russian pronouncement about its peace offensives but repeatedly stressed that the American government obviously used its official statements for a quite different purpose than the official one.¹⁴⁾ Such a double standard indicates that the Kolko's books are clearly put in the service of giving an unequivocal answer to the question "who was to blame?": the Cold War in their view was part of an American attempt to create a world order open to and safe for the spread of American capitalism. If it would not be able to expand over the whole world, they state, American capitalism → being unable to enlarge its internal market through redistribution of income → would time and again be subjected to economic crisis. American policy in the Cold War and the intervention in Vietnam are thus the outcome of a conscious strategy to make the world safe for the expansion of American capitalism.

As totalitarian and aggressive communism is in the conventional interpretation the single cause to which all evil is attributed, in the Kolko's view expansionist capitalism, personified in the American government, is the sole cause to blame. The Kolko's speak explicitly of the innocence of the American people, being deceived by the government in Washington and the big capitalist corporations. Their view is also determinist:

"A society's goals in the last analysis reflect its objective needs, → economic, strategic and political → in the light of the requirements of its specific structure of power. Since this power structure in America has existed over many decades in the capitalist form its demands are the common premises for the application of American power → one that theorists attribute to social consensus and sanctions, but which in reality is always reflected, in the class structure and class needs."¹⁵⁾

Ronald Steel has pointed out that the Kolko's determinism does not in the least imply that they are inclined "to absolve the makers of foreign policy,

whose actions they so condemn". On the contrary, they call into being "a chamber of horrors in which infallible intellectual giants continuously conspire behind the curtains".¹⁶⁾ In other words, for the Kolko's there is at the same time an impersonal cause, the capitalist system, which is to blame and specific people, the decision makers in Washington, who are guilty of starting the Cold War and keeping it going.

The revisionists differed among themselves about the explanation of specific events and they do not all emphasize economic determinism as much as the Kolko's, but they did agree in general about the answer to the question "who is to blame?".

For the revisionists the cause to blame for the Cold War is the United States, is American policy and the American economic and/or political structure, even though they differ, for example, on the relative autonomy of what Richard Barnet has called the 'national security bureaucracy' and of Cold War ideology which according to Christopher Lasch acquired "a force and persuasiveness of its own, quite independent of the political and economic interests underlying it."¹⁷⁾

More 'liberal' authors, such as Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., argued against the revisionist interpretation that American decision makers were not malevolent but misguided.¹⁸⁾ They argued that American policy was too ideological, too much inclined to interpret the world in terms of a struggle between powers of good and evil. It was too moralist, not sufficiently 'realist'. American expansionism could not be denied but it had to be attributed to the international political situation after the end of the Second World War. America's position was then so favourable that it could even tolerate a confused and inconsistent policy. American policy in Europe was directed at the restoration of the balance of power: that was the real meaning of containment policy. It was later wrongly applied to Asia. The Vietnam war was the consequence of that mistaken and unnecessary universalism or globalism. The war became so serious because of an unfortunate constellation of circumstances in which the American political leaders more and more entangled themselves. This so-called 'quagmire thesis' is in itself a more adequate explanation for the course of the American intervention than revisionism - was articulated most clearly by the historian and former advisor of President Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger, not only as an analysis of the origins of the war in Vietnam, but also as an

interpretation of the development of the Cold War.¹⁹⁾ It was again primarily motivated, however, by the question "who is to blame?". Schlesinger wanted to demonstrate that the bad results of American Vietnam policy were the unintended effects of good motives. As Robert Tucker formulates that thesis in a summary of the 'liberal' view of American foreign policy:

"(The results) may find our judgment wanting, but our motives cannot be gainsaid; if we have misused our power, it is not through the desire to exploit others. The failure of American foreign policy is a failure compounded of sentimentality and intellectual error - a policy of misplaced altruism ... somehow redeemable precisely because of its essentially disinterested character."²⁰⁾

Ellsberg has pointed out that this interpretation has been defended especially by former advisors of American presidents as an attempt to widen the 'circle of responsibility' from the center in which the decisions were taken. As an example he cites Townsend Hoopes, former assistant secretary for the Air Force under President Johnson, who formulates the question to be asked about Vietnam as: "How the entire nation has stumbled down the long slippery slope of self-delusion into the engulfing morass."²¹⁾

2.3 Towards greater detachment?

These examples may suffice to show to what extent the question "who is to blame?" has set the terms of the discussion about the origins and development of the Cold War. This remained the case with later historians who have been called post-revisionists. They do not dismiss blaming as an obstacle to proper historical analysis, but try to develop more subtle answers:

"They accept the main contention of the revisionists - that the United States bears a heavy share of blame for the Cold War - but deny that it was deliberately created for either political or economic reasons."²²⁾

In other words, the questions they raise remain within the framework of the nature and distribution of blame for the Cold War. John Lewis Gaddis, for example, has tried to solve the problem as follows. In the United States public opinion is a powerful factor which limits the possibilities of decision makers to pursue a rational foreign policy. The American government did seriously regard the Soviet Union after 1945 as a threat to American

security (this is denied by most revisionist authors who point to the large power surplus of the United States and the weakness of the Soviet Union immediately after the war) but President Truman considered it necessary to exaggerate that threat for internal political reasons. The American decisions which contributed most to setting the Cold War in motion (the postponement of a second front in Europe during the war; the refusal to recognize Soviet security needs in Eastern Europe; the termination of economic aid to the Soviet Union immediately upon the end of the war; the decision to keep its monopoly of the atom bomb) are best explained as attempts to safeguard the support of American public opinion. In his conclusion Gaddis ties his analysis to the question "who was to blame?":

"If one must assign responsibility for the Cold War, the most meaningful way to proceed is to ask which side had the greater opportunity to accommodate itself, at least in part, to the other's position, given the range of alternatives as they appeared at the time. Revisionists have argued that American policy makers possessed greater freedom of action, but their view ignores the constraints imposed by domestic politics. Little is known, even today, about how Stalin defined his options, but it does seem safe to say that the very nature of the Soviet system afforded him a larger selection of alternatives than were open to leaders of the United States. The Russian dictator was immune from pressure²³⁾ from Congress, public opinion, or the press."

Gaddis thus introduces the margins of choice of decision-makers as an explicit criterion to assess blame and weakens its importance by using the concept of responsibility. But his answer shows the difficulties of the application of his criterion: is it indeed the case that democratically elected governments have smaller margins of choice than dictatorial governments? The postrevisionist historian Lloyd Gardner, using the same criterion, comes to the opposite conclusion:

"Responsibility for the way in which the Cold War developed, at least, belongs more to the United States. At the end of the war it had much greater opportunity and far more options to influence the course of events than the Soviet Union, whose situation in victory was worse²⁴⁾ in some ways than that of the defeated countries."

For Gardner it is the most powerful party in a conflict that can more easily pursue a policy of compromise. The United States, however, did precisely the

opposite after Yalta. The Soviet Union took heavy losses during the war, both in terms of manpower and economic capacity. It felt compelled to secure a stable sphere of control in Eastern Europe to prevent the possibility of renewed attacks from Western Europe. America's geographical position made it more secure. It thus had wider margins of choice and therefore in Gardner's view had to bear the largest share of blame for the Cold War.

The debate between the representatives of orthodox, revisionist and post-revisionist interpretations of the origin and development of the Cold War has considerably widened the scope of available factual material. But the preoccupation with attributing blame remained so strong, that the approach of historians often resembled criminal proceedings more than scientific inquiry. Rather than attempting to understand the interweaving of Soviet and American policies in the context of the development of the global figuration of international relations and the domestic policies of the great powers, they asked: "Who started the Cold War?"; "Who 'acted' and who 'reacted'?"; "Who had the greatest freedom of choice?"; "Can political leaders be blamed for particular decisions in the sense, that they had the will and intent to achieve evil results?"; "Or can one find extenuating circumstances for their taking these decisions?".

Even an historian like Gaddis who goes quite a way in seeing the Cold War as resulting from "a complicated interaction of external and internal developments, inside both the United States and the Soviet Union" still felt forced to answer these questions.

"... policy makers in both the United States and the Soviet Union were constantly weighing each other's intentions, as they perceived them, and modifying their own courses of action accordingly. In addition, officials in both capitals brought to the task of policy formulation a variety of preconceptions, shaped by personality, ideology, political pressures, even ignorance and irrationality, all of which influenced their behaviour. Once this complex interaction of stimulus and response is taken into account, it becomes clear that neither side can bear sole responsibility for the onset of the Cold War."²⁵⁾

Gaddis thus shifts emphasis from attributing to distributing blame. But the question "who is to blame?" - or "is one of the rivals more to blame than the other?" - can only be answered in the form of a judicial

sentence.²⁶⁾ Only such a sentence can stop the process of continuing questioning and pronounce the accused (to some extent) guilty or innocent. When no court or judge is available the question "who (or what) is to blame?" can only lead to a discussion without end, to an infinite regress. That can contribute but very little to a more realistic understanding, whether of the genesis of an act perceived as a crime or of the process of great power rivalry. Blaming does not focus on the interconnections between the actions of the rivals and the resulting development of their rivalry, but on the one party presumed to be guilty, on the nature of its society, political system and ideology; on its capabilities, its intentions and its policies. The other party — the one with which the pleader identifies — is then depicted as innocent, as a potential victim of aggression, and therefore forced to resist and to become as strong as possible in order to frustrate the evil designs of the enemy.

Since the informal alliance between the United States and China a complication in the pattern of blaming has arisen. The Soviet Union still has the more impersonal term 'imperialism' at its disposal, which does not have to be synonymous with the United States, at least not with a specific presidential regime. But the United States can no longer use the concept 'international communism' to designate the source of evil and threat. 'International terrorism' functions as a partial substitute, but that has to weak a link with the Soviet Union. It may have been for that reason it became necessary again to blame and accuse the Soviet Union in a more direct manner, as President Reagan has done.

The prevalence of blaming is a consequence of the doublebind process of unregulated rivalry.²⁷⁾ The nature of the threat is not perceived as the possible outcome of the rivalry itself, in which both parties actively participate, but as the one-sided aggressiveness and expansionism of the opponent. To put an end to mutual blaming should be the main purpose of ideological disarmament.

2. The Doublebind: One-Sided Perception of Threat and its Consequences

Blaming the opponent as a predominant means of orientation and of propaganda is not confined to the West. The one-sided attribution of blame on both sides goes together with a one-sided designation and perception of threat:

not the threat of great power rivalry and nuclear war, but the 'Soviet threat' or the 'threat of American imperialism'. Such a one-sided perspective is, for example, precisely what the concept of 'peace' is supposed to convey in the official justification of Soviet foreign policy. The Soviet Union, it is argued, inherently pursues a policy of peace. Thus everything it does is in response to the (potential) actions of its opponent and necessary to preserve peace. The military power of the Soviet Union — and its military interventions — are necessary to defend socialism against the aggressive intentions of imperialism and thus serve the maintenance of peace. Once the assumption of one-sidedness has been accepted, an unbreakable chain of arguments can follow.

That is not difficult. Blaming the enemy appeals on both sides to the patriotic sentiments of the public, to the strong self-identification with one's own country, reinforced by the doublebind nature of great power rivalry. The one-sided image of threat makes it at the same time easier for the political and military leaders of the great powers to justify not only specific policies or interventions but also continuing arms acquisition and the building of military strength.

3.1 As if conduct and the role of domestic politics and ideology

Even though the rivals have strong common interests in avoiding nuclear war and in policies and agreements to reduce the risks of accidental and unintentional war, they still represent the danger of nuclear war as arising primarily from the expansionist acts and intentions and the military strategy and capabilities of the opponent. The mutual incriminations to that effect are not always easy to refute. They seem persuasive — from the point of view of the accusing side — because their rivalry makes both great powers behave as if they were consciously striving for hegemony, even though they may in fact just try to contain the opponent or to maintain or acquire a particular strategic position. Expansionist motives, whether actually present or not, can always be inferred from such as if conduct. That sustains therefore a continuing polemic and exchange of charges and countercharges: Vietnam against Czechoslovakia; Central America against Afghanistan and so on and so forth. The apologies and justifications remain the same too:

1. the necessity of 'containment' of potential expansion of the opponent (domino theory);
2. the need for protection of one's own 'legitimate' sphere of influence against possible encroachments, and
3. the obligation to honour commitments made to one's allies.

The charge of expansionism or imperialism can also be supported by reference to certain presumed properties of the opponent, such as the supposedly inherent need of capitalism to expand in order to find new markets and investment opportunities or the assumption that Leninist ideology requires expansion for the purpose of world revolution. Such statements are irrefutable, as any empirical observation pointing to the contrary can always be countered by the argument "they are just biding their time, because they are not powerful enough as yet ... " Implied in that argument is that it is our own (military) strength which successfully deters and contains the opponent and thus maintains the peace.

Though there are certainly specific and different domestic influences upon the foreign and security policies of the great powers, it is wrong as the one-sided perception of great power rivalry does - to reduce that rivalry to the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism, or to that between capitalism and socialism, for that matter. From the analysis in Chapter II it follows that great power rivalry has an irreducible and coercive dynamic of its own. Their rivalry makes great powers perceive it in their vital interest as becoming or remaining ahead of their opponent(s), as acquiring or preserving strategic positions needed in the eventuality of war, as being the first to fill up a 'power vacuum' or as increasing one's power in order as a minimum not to worsen one's own relative power position. The outcome of such rivalry can be a struggle for territory, strategic influence or any other power resource. In this respect ulterior motives or the domestic properties of the rivals are both irrelevant. Their rivalry forces the great powers into expansion-containment conduct, whether or not they may also be motivated by an explicit expansionist ideology or by certain requirements of their political or social-economic system. The rivals constantly keep each other under close scrutiny. Their moves are conditioned both by the course of the rivalry up to the present and by anticipations of what the opponent might do in the future in order to get relative advantages, in a military or political sense, but also in terms of

propaganda successes and reinforcing the 'credibility' of their 'commitments'.

The rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States fits such a pattern quite well. The two rivals are geographically very differently located and they have widely divergent foreign policy traditions: the Soviet Union as a continental power, heir to the Tsarist empire, always surrounded by potential or actual rivals and seeing it as necessary to attack and defend itself in all directions, is bound to behave in a different manner than a geographically relatively isolated and primarily maritime - and later air - power as the United States. Is it then not remarkable how quickly the United States, despite its isolationist tradition, was caught up in worldwide rivalry with the Soviet Union after 1945?

Domestic politics and ideology may thus influence the specific character of the policies of the great powers and the way in which they secure their power and influence, for example through military occupation and attempts to impose totalitarian rule as in Eastern Europe or through the Marshall plan and a military alliance as in Western Europe. For that reason there is no need to uphold moral equivalence between the opponents, if one sees their conduct vis a vis each other as primarily conditioned by the nature of great power rivalry. In other words, though it is great power rivalry that as such produces containment²⁸ expansion conduct, the different historical and domestic characteristics of the great powers may shape the mode of such conduct differently.²⁸⁾ In the United States the President can be constrained by Congress and thus indirectly by public debate, not so in the Soviet Union. That can make a difference - though it does not make the United States by definition more restrained than the Soviet Union.²⁹⁾ To allow for moral differences between the foreign policies of the rivals, however, should not obscure the 'equivalence' of actual foreign policy conduct under the sway of rivalry; otherwise the argument against assuming 'moral equivalence' is no more than a variant of blaming.

If it is easy in the West to assume that the conduct of the United States has been primarily reactive - whether to the (potential) damaging activities of the Soviet Union or to great power rivalry - it is much more difficult to do the same for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is a threat to Western Europe. If it could conquer Western²⁸Europe without running any risk of nuclear war nor major resistance, it might well do so. It is also a serious

rival to the global position of the United States. The one-sided perception of threat therefore appears as self-evident.

The customary one-sided perception of threat implies that the Soviet Union's foreign policy is seen as driven by internal political and/or ideological considerations. The argument to the contrary made above is supported by William Zimmermann's survey of "What do scholars know about Soviet foreign policy?".³⁰⁾ Zimmermann writes:

"... we may now safely claim 'to know' the reactive nature of Soviet foreign policy ... The realization that Soviet foreign policy is, to some important extent, reactive, represents a significant change in specialists' thinking over the last twenty years when the overwhelming tendency was to see Soviet foreign policy as driven largely by internal forces".³¹⁾

Zimmermann has added that the questions 'how reactive?' and 'reactive to what?', were still much disputed. The answer to them seems not too difficult, however, once one switches from a one-sided to a two-sided perspective. 'Reactive' then means: to the rivalry between the great powers - which leaves the specific manner (how?) indeed open. The conclusion of foreign policy analysts that both great powers act primarily 'reactive' in the context of their rivalry, however, has not yet much influenced the perspectives of politicians, the military or the public at large. The one-sided perspective on rivalry and threat is still predominant, both in the Soviet Union and the United States.³²⁾

3.2 Tendencies towards overperception of threat

Such a one-sided perspective leads to different kinds of overperception of threat. These in turn give rise to measures which may produce exactly those countermeasures that seem to confirm the original overperception of threat. In that sense overperceptions - especially in the field of arms competition - are usually self-confirming. But more important still is their spiraling effect, the way in which they give concrete form to the circularity of doublebind processes. Emotional overperception of threat leads to equally emotional responses. These constitute the source of overperception of threat on the other side and lead to reactions that not only confirm the original overperception but also sustain arms competition and political tensions. Such a circular process can only be temporarily broken by conscious attempts by both sides to achieve some relaxation of tensions ('détente') - based on

the perception of common interest in avoiding nuclear war. Until now the circularity set in motion by overperception of threat has time and time again reasserted itself. The Strategic Defense Initiative of President Reagan contains that danger once again.³³⁾

To perceive the opponent as the sole source of threat and tension and oneself as being purely on the defense - without being able to see that one's own defensively intended actions may be interpreted as offensive by the other side - can and often does lead to the following tendencies:

1. a tendency to overestimate the military capabilities and rate of growth of military power of the opponent - and reversely, to underestimate one's own military prowess. This has even found its way in the official American method to calculate the Soviet defense budget. Soviet arsenals and troops are added up and then it is worked out how much it would cost in the United States to have the same. More specifically the Soviet Union has overestimated the nuclear capability of the United States resulting from the arms policy of the Kennedy administration as giving it a first strike capacity.³⁴⁾ The long term nuclear weapons programme which the Soviet Union developed in response led in turn to a similar overestimation in the Seventies in the United States - the first strike fear of the 'window of vulnerability' scenario and more in general the perception of strategic inferiority - which justified the arms build-up response of the Carter and Reagan administrations.³⁵⁾ There is also a continuous tendency on the side of the United States and NATO to overestimate the 'conventional superiority' of the Soviet Union in Europe.³⁶⁾
2. a tendency to overestimate the willingness of the opponent to run risks in exerting pressure by threats ('nuclear blackmail'); in undertaking limited aggressive actions, such as 'seizing Berlin' or 'grabbing Northern Norway', or in taking advantage of crisis situations by surprise. This has never happened, on the contrary (see Par. 4), but that has not influenced threat assessments.
3. a tendency to base defense planning and arms procurement on worst case analysis and to take improbable scenarios seriously, such as that of a surprise attack.³⁷⁾ A variant of worst case analysis is the tendency to apply Murphy's law ("anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.") to one's own military situation but not to that of the opponent, who is

presumed to have the capacity for perfect planning, control and organization.³⁸⁾

4. a tendency to exaggerate the influence of (supposedly ideologically determined) long term strategy upon the foreign policy of the opponent. Short term muddling through policies and that is the fate of every foreign policy in a complex and fickle world are interpreted as parts of a grand design for world domination. Such an assumption, for example, underlies the misleading characterization of the Soviet Union as a 'revolutionary power' that has to be taught to behave as a 'normal' great power, restrain its ambitions and accept the global balance of power.³⁹⁾ This kind of thinking also leads to the rejection of any concessions necessary for a compromise agreement with the opponent, as the enemy will interpret these as a sign of weakness and ask for more (The Munich analogy once again).
5. a tendency to keep thinking about nuclear weapons as normal (or relative) weapons so that superiority and inferiority may retain their meaning, rather than drawing the consequences not only in conflict behaviour but also in arms procurement and military strategy - from the shared danger of escalation of any military confrontation to the 'assured destruction' of nuclear war. The one-sided perspective thus predisposes towards pre-nuclear thinking about military power, the implications of which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV.
6. a tendency to easily find fault with the opponent, but refuse to see how one is stretching agreements or rules oneself. Mutual accusations of the breaking of arms control agreements, such as the ABM-treaty, are the result.⁴⁰⁾
7. a tendency to develop fantasy images or scenarios that for a time exert a strong influence on foreign and defense policy. Examples of such images are the 'bomber gap' in the time of President Eisenhower; the 'missile gap' (after Sputnik) which led to the nuclear weapons programme of the Kennedy administration and the 'window of vulnerability' and 'present danger' scenario's that justified to President Reagan's armaments programme and his primarily rhetorical confrontation policy towards the Soviet Union.⁴¹⁾ These fantasy images combine the different tendencies discussed before in one powerful symbol. Such symbols are perhaps more important in the United States than in the Soviet Union where public

opinion plays a much lesser role. Nevertheless, fantasy images about first strike capabilities of the United States do play a role in the Soviet Union too and can perhaps explain the fierceness of Soviet resistance to the SDI:

"(The Soviets) are haunted by a nightmare scenario in which the United States beats them to the defensive punch and combines these new systems with ongoing offensive improvements to gain real nuclear superiority".⁴²⁾

The problem with such fantasy images is that they can usually be supported by what seem real indications such as the statements of particular politicians, officials or generals, which in combination with the other tendencies discussed above gives them their plausibility. Daniel Frei summarizes his analysis of the Soviet and American perceptions of each other as follows:

"The mutual accusations seem to be largely identical each side reproaches the other with aiming at world domination, being driven by incessant expansionism, being unworthy of trust, projecting and exploiting power, planning a nuclear attack and misrepresenting and distorting the image of the respective adversary. Each side also criticizes the other for not being interested in really serious disarmament negotiations, not complying with the provisions of existing agreements, trying to obtain one-sided advantages of all kinds, and cooperating only if forced to so by the changing "correlation⁴³⁾ of forces" or leverage⁴³⁾ creating incentives".

These tendencies towards overperception of threat influence the foreign and defence policies of the great powers in different degrees and ways, but in the same direction: they hinder the further development of the limited cooperation between the great powers that the danger of nuclear war requires. They can explain continuing tensions and resurgence of 'cold war' much better than relaxation of tensions and successful negotiations.

This can also be said of the last consequence of a one-sided perception of threat: the conception of deterrence. Deterrence as the basis of nuclear and foreign policy strategy is also still seen as one-sided.⁴⁴⁾ As Patrick Morgan writes: "Of course, everyone knows what deterrence is the use of threats of harm to prevent someone from doing something you do not want him to."⁴⁵⁾ The nuclear arsenals of the great powers actively or passively

threaten their opponents with unacceptable harm. The United States thus appears to deter the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union in turn the United States. Though many different conceptions and kinds of deterrence are distinguished in the literature, they are all of the same one-sided or at best mutual character. Power A attempts through its military posture and declaratory (or rhetorical) strategy to deter power B from any action that may endanger its security or its (vital) interests. In that sense deterrence has been a constant feature of prenuclear interstate relations. Nuclear weapons are then presumed to have changed only the means but not the nature of deterrence. But deterrence - if that concept is still to be used - has become shared, rather than mutual. It is the shared risk that even the smallest military confrontation between the great powers may escalate into a nuclear war which will spare nobody - not even the political leaders, as in prenuclear times - that 'deters'. It will be further argued in Chapter IV that the one-sided conception of deterrence is not only wrong but forms a very important hindrance to a proper understanding of the role of nuclear weapons in international politics - and to a proper handling of them by the great powers. The one-sided perception of deterrence serves as the justification of the continuous 'modernization' of nuclear weapons and of attempts to improve one's own side in the nuclear equation (as an indication of military strength, if not 'superiority').

It is enough here to again stress the circularity of the process: one-sided perceptions of threat regularly lead to overperception and to fantasy images, which in turn produce responses which tend to confirm and strengthen the original perceptions and images. The rivals are not just tied to each other as enemies, they are also tied to their own emotional responses and ideological blinders. They are often so involved in their own perspective, that they are unable to perceive the circularity of the figuration they form together. That circularity characterizes a doublebind situation and makes at the same time clear why it is selfsustaining and extremely difficult to break through.

Nevertheless, there has been more realistic practice in the relations between the great powers than was to be expected from the dynamics of their rivalry. The 'Cold War' subsided after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Afterwards a kind of silent understanding about mutual restraint has developed and the need for arms control and reducing the risks of nuclear

war was recognized though the rivalry itself has continued. The question then becomes: should these mutual expectations of restraint be interpreted as an uneasy and temporary truce or as a step in the direction of the development of a durable form of common security, limited though it may be?

4. The Nuclear Age: The Development of Mutual Restraint

Despite the ideological intensity and the global nature of the rivalry between the two great powers, which provided a wide-ranging and large number of occasions for military confrontations, there has not been a single armed clash between them since 1945. Given the doublebind nature of hegemonial struggles in international politics, as described in Chapter II, the contrary would have been much more likely. Similar processes of bipolar great power rivalry, such as those between Athens and Sparta, Rome and Carthago or France and England have led to one or more wars. Take the following description of the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States:

"Two states join forces to defeat a menacing barbarian power. After their victory the two find themselves considerably more powerful than any of their neighbours. Former allies of the two victors who had counted themselves their equals must now defer to them. The wartime partnership dissolves, and the two giants become rivals. Each blames the other for their falling out. Each feels aggrieved. Each feels threatened. The leaders on each side conduct a war of words, a propaganda campaign to persuade their own people and citizens of third countries that the other is to blame for the quarrel.

Domestic dissimilarities contribute to the friction between them. One state is democratic, the other autocratic. The people of one live throughout the known world. The citizens of the other stay largely within their own borders.

The two states have different strategic strengths, as well. The democracy is a formidable sea power. The authoritarian state enjoys a reputation for prowess on land. Each surrounds itself with allies. Here, too, their styles differ. The autocracy prefers to install similar regimes in the states allied to it. The democracy insists simply that its allies share their resources. As the two principal powers jockey for advantage they try to avoid being dragged into open conflict with each

other by their allies. Several times, however, they come to the brink of war."⁴⁶⁾

If one substitutes 'city=state' for 'state' this passage is an even more accurate description of the rivalry between Athens and Sparta in the fifth century BC, who not only came several times to the brink of war (as can hardly be said even about the Cuban missile crisis) but to war itself. The difference between drift towards war on the one hand and increasing restraint and decreasing expectation of war on the other, is thus more important than the curiously detailed similarities between these two instances of great power rivalry.

Why the difference? Is it because nuclear deterrence has worked and has prevented nuclear war, as it is often asserted? That formulation, however, departs from the one-sided perception of the rivalry in which our nuclear weapons are seen as restraining the enemy and deterring him from a nuclear attack or other possible uses of military force. Restraint of the opponent is then perceived as nothing more than the effect of our military capabilities on determining his calculus of loss or gain. In that conception, nuclear deterrence would not differ from 'conventional' deterrence. There would then be no need to examine the wider political and moral=psychological effects of nuclear weapons on the conduct of the great powers. The neglect of these effects makes the thesis that deterrence has 'worked' quite vulnerable to the counterargument that this cannot be proven: if there would not have been nuclear weapons, peace may have been preserved also. The anti=nuclear movements would add that nuclear deterrence keeps the nuclear arms race going. One day that will have to end in nuclear war, they say.

In a discussion about counterfactual history proof in the formal sense is, of course, impossible. But there is sufficient evidence of the restraining influence of nuclear weapons on the political and conflict conduct of the great powers to make the thesis plausible that the nuclear revolution has made the world more peaceful. But the analysis should then not remain confined to the one-sided conception of nuclear deterrence. It should focus instead on the influence of nuclear weapons on the development of the rivalry itself.

A comprehensive analysis of that process would require at least a separate volume, however. No more can be done here than describing the crucial factors and events in the development of mutual restraint - and expectations of

such restraint in the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

4.1 Why did the United States make no use of its nuclear monopoly?

The first atomic bombs were used to end a war.⁴⁷⁾ The horror and massive destruction these explosives wrought were so widely felt and publicized, that this in itself has probably constituted a force for restraint. It has been argued that if nuclear weapons would not have been used against Japan, their use in the East-West conflict would have been more likely.⁴⁸⁾ The precise effects of a nuclear explosion on the population of a city were indeed not known in advance. After President Truman had seen no more than aerial photographs of the damage caused to Hiroshima by the atomic bomb, he said that a 'terrible responsibility' had fallen upon him.⁴⁹⁾

The long-term effects of radiation and the climatic and environmental effects of a large-scale nuclear war ('nuclear winter') have become known even more gradually.⁵⁰⁾ In 1945 it was still easier than today to think of nuclear weapons as no more than a very powerful and destructive addition to the available tools of war rather than as a revolutionary instrument of destruction with the potential to transform international politics or destroy the world.

The initial responses to the bomb were varied and at loggerheads with each other. It should be remembered that the wartime alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States only gradually turned into a 'Cold War'. During the first years after the war nuclear strategy was oriented to war in general, not to a possible war with the Soviet Union.⁵¹⁾ Futuristic speculations about automated and push-button war received much attention. Major-General J.F.C. Fuller even anticipated space wars

"(between two) tactical organizations of atom-charged and propelled rockets the one offensive and the other defensive. (M)iles above the surface of the earth, noiseless battles will be fought between blast and counterblast. Now and again an invader will get through, and up will go London, Paris, or New York, in a 40000 foot high mushroom of smoke and dust..."⁵²⁾

The military did not take such prospects very seriously, however. Official reports put the development of 'transpolar' or 'transoceanic' missiles

twenty-five years away.⁵³⁾ But the nearly as fanciful (as it required the secret transportation and assembly of components and at the time would have resulted in unreliable and uncontrollable weapons) delivery method of the 'suitcase bomb' did receive serious attention: "The beginning of a new war will surely involve not only the launching of the missiles, but the explosion of the mines that have secretly been set near key targets to provide the pinpoint accuracy that long-range weapons may possibly lack".⁵⁴⁾ A consensus soon emerged, however, that the long-range bomber would remain the 'only vehicle with enough accuracy over the next ten years'.⁵⁴⁾

During the brief period of the American nuclear monopoly there was but little discussion of the desirability and possibility of preventive war against the Soviet Union. The leader of the Manhattan project, General Groves, did recognize only two alternatives: either "a hard-boiled, realistic enforceable world agreement ensuring the outlawing of atomic weapons" or "an exclusive supremacy" for the United States and its "dependable allies". To maintain such supremacy "a preemptive nuclear strike against foreign atomic-research facilities" should not be excluded, as he wrote in a January 1946 memorandum to Congress.⁵⁵⁾ But his suggestion had already been rejected by President Truman who had committed the American government to pursuing international control rather than a complete outlawing of the bomb.⁵⁶⁾ Bertrand Russell's plea for a nuclear ultimatum in order to force the Soviet Union to accept world government, made in October 1946, did not receive any official attention at the time. There were other voices arguing for a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union before it would have developed its own nuclear weapons, but they remained isolated.⁵⁷⁾ One reason may have been again that the Soviet Union was only gradually transformed from wartime ally into the enemy. Another reason was that the notion of preventive war with 'a weapon that might destroy millions overnight' (Dwight Eisenhower) had become repulsive, both because of the great costs and the lack of results of strategic bombing of cities during World War II.⁵⁸⁾ And the third reason — though that could have been remedied if preventive war would have been seriously considered — was that there was in fact no stockpile of atomic bombs. Until 1947 there were only unassembled components available.⁵⁹⁾

The idea of preventive war only received some attention in official circles after the Cold War had started. During the Berlin blockade Winston Churchill — out of power at the time — urged a nuclear attack on the Soviet

Union and received support from the American Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson. But Churchill's proposal was immediately rejected by both Truman and Attlee.⁶⁰⁾ After the first atomic test by the Soviet Union in 1949 preventive war was again discussed among American policy-makers. It figured as one of four 'possible courses of action' in the draft NSC#68 (1950) prepared by a special Department of Defense and State Department group under the direction of Paul Nitze, but it was rejected as both unlikely to lead to the surrender of the Soviet Union and 'repugnant' to the American people.⁶¹⁾ Preventive war was openly espoused by Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews, who wanted Americans to become the first 'agressors for peace'. President Truman, however, rejected preventive war as a policy 'unthinkable for rational men' and fired Secretary Mathews for having talked in public about it.⁶²⁾

The United States thus passed by what Richard Ned Lebow has called a 'window of opportunity': 'a period during which a state possesses a significant military advantage over an adversary'.⁶³⁾ It knew that the Soviet Union would soon acquire nuclear weapons too, but it did nothing about it, neither during the period of actual monopoly until 1949 nor during the period of its continuously declining nuclear superiority, which lasted at least until roughly the late fifties.

Why? Next to the restraints mentioned already, there was the important technical consideration that it would be very doubtful that a (preventive) nuclear bombardment of its cities would lead to the Soviet Union's defeat. Would it stop a Soviet counteroffensive in Western Europe? Three years of allied bombing of Germany had done little to weaken German morale or its industrial capacity. Would atomic bombings not be politically counterproductive? The Harmon report (1949) which had to examine the role of atomic bombs in American military strategy argued they would:

"For the majority of Soviet people, atomic bombing would validate Soviet propaganda against foreign powers, stimulate resentment against the United States, unify these people and increase their will to fight"⁶⁴⁾

This was a very important argument, as it had wider implications. If strategic bombing was likely to be counterproductive that not only did away with the temptation of a preventive 'first strike'. It also reduced or even eliminated the value of nuclear superiority for political purposes, because it removed the possibility for 'nuclear blackmail', for using nuclear

threats in order to force the opponent to give in or to make concessions. As we will see, these considerations would make nuclear weapons politically impotent. If we look at the conduct of the great powers during the period of the 'window of opportunity', it gives the impression that they probably realized from the beginning on that this was the case.

The United States never tried to directly threaten the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union behaved most of the time as if nuclear weapons did not exist. A further indication of the lack of political relevance of nuclear weapons at the time is the rather striking fact that neither George Kennan's famous 'long telegram' from Moscow to the State Department (1946) nor his later 'X' article in Foreign Affairs (1947) 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', which formed the intellectual underpinning of the policy of 'containment' of Soviet expansion, mentioned nuclear weapons at all.⁶⁵⁾ Even the famous NSC-68 report - drafted after a presidential directive "to analyze the combined implications of the Communist victory in China, the Soviet atomic bomb, and the American decision to construct a thermonuclear weapon" - which recommended a "rapid build-up of political, economic and military strength in the free world" did not discuss the possibility of nuclear threats. The 'marked atomic superiority' of the United States, it said, "for the time being ... inhibits aggressive Soviet action" and enables the United States "to launch a build-up of strength which will support a firm policy directed to the frustration of Kremlin design".⁶⁶⁾ That is all. The relation between nuclear superiority and political advantage thus remains indirect and unspecified in NSC-68. Pragmatic and moral-psychological considerations thus converged already in the early years in a clear predominance of the forces towards restraint in American policy.

The crucial test came with the blockade of Berlin in 1948, when the United States still enjoyed its atomic monopoly. Only because the United States lacked means for action in Berlin itself, did Truman approve the sending of sixty B-29 bombers to bases in England and a few to Germany, along with an expansion of the airlift to Berlin.⁶⁷⁾ These bombers were 'atomic-capable' (as was stressed by the American government) but they did not carry any nuclear weapons as was 'known and approved by the President'.⁶⁸⁾ Truman told Secretary of the Army Royall, who argued that the bomb should be used:

"You have to understand this is not a military weapon ... It is used to wipe out women and children and unarmed people, and not for military uses ... You have to understand that I have got to

think about the effect of such a thing on international relations. This is no time to be juggling an atom bomb around".⁶⁹⁾

Truman here adds another argument for restraint: 'international relations' or the harm 'juggling an atom bomb around' would do to the American reputation and to its relations with all other nations of the world. Despite pressures from those - particularly in the military - who believed the atomic bomb should be handled as an ordinary weapon, President Truman showed "a consistently cautious attitude towards actual use of the bomb since the end of the war".⁷⁰⁾ He also firmly established civilian - read Presidential - control over atomic energy and weapons:

"As long as I am in the White House I will be opposed to taking atomic weapons away from the hands in which they are now, and they will only be delivered to the military by particular order of the President issued at the time when they are needed".⁷¹⁾

The other side of the coin was that the Soviet Union - in part to resist in advance attempts at nuclear intimidation - behaved as if there was no American atomic monopoly. A good case can thus be made for the argument, that sheer possession of nuclear weapons already makes for restraint. The Soviet Union behaved in general more recklessly before than after it acquired a nuclear arsenal itself - and became confronted with the impossibility of using nuclear weapons for political gain, and now that there were two in the game, with the risks of unintended or uncontrolled escalation.

In 1945 "Soviet leaders carefully avoided signs of concern about the (new) weapons"⁷²⁾. Stalin discounted the possibility that the West would start a nuclear war, but the bomb made him determined to redress the power balance by all means at his disposal. That he did not see an immediate threat was confirmed "because the Americans abstained scrupulously from brandishing the weapons to blackmail him."⁷³⁾ But Stalin did take care to provide a military counterweight to American air power. According to David Holloway:

"Soviet forces in Europe were the main element in this policy. American bombers could threaten Soviet cities and industrial centres, but Soviet forces could not strike the United States. Consequently the Soviet army was deployed in Eastern Europe not only to safeguard Soviet interests there, but⁷⁴⁾ also to strike Western Europe in the event of war."

This strategic conception probably led Stalin to test American resolve with respect to the Allied position in Berlin. The Berlin blockade was a risky venture, as a direct confrontation and the possibility of a wider war could not be excluded, given the presence of a considerable number of American, British and French troops in Berlin. The Soviet Union has in any case not taken any comparable risk in Europe after 1949.

The use of the term 'Cold War' itself to describe the intensity of the political conflicts and the emerging global rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States indicates that a real, a 'hot' war was not considered likely, despite the high degree of ideological mobilization on both sides. Lebow has pointed out that expectations of war can make an important difference. The German political leaders in 1914, for example, were convinced of the inevitability of war. Postwar American Presidents, on the contrary, all "preferred to believe that war was avoidable and that the Soviet Union might one day mellow and become more moderate in its foreign policy goals".⁷⁵⁾ The 'thaw' after Stalin's death and later "the sobering effect that realization of the true destructiveness of nuclear weapons was expected to have upon Soviet leaders" sustained that expectation. This may have been a "motivated bias":

"As the presidents who would have had to authorize the use of America's nuclear weapons did not want to believe that this would ever become necessary, they revised their estimates of the probability of war downwards".

And that bias may to some extent have been self-fulfilling:

"Motivated by moral-psychological needs and after the development of a Soviet military nuclear capability, by political-military needs as well, belief in the possibility of avoiding nuclear war may have helped to maintain the peace. It made policy-makers cautious rather than risk-prone and more alert than they might otherwise have been to finding ways of preventing war." (My italics, VdB)

Soviet leaders also had low expectations of war from 1945 on. As Vojtech Mastny had pointed out, Soviet theoreticians came already then to the conclusion that neither the contradictions between the capitalist powers nor the unbridgeable differences between capitalism and socialism would make war inevitable. There was thus no 'danger of war' but rather a 'threat of danger of war'.⁷⁶⁾ This somewhat ambivalent recognition later became the more

straightforward doctrine of 'peaceful coexistence'. Lebow's suggestion of the self-fulfilling relation between declining expectations of war and caution may therefore also hold for the Soviet Union.

The pattern of restraint with respect to nuclear weapons, aided by the understanding of their political importance, even during the time of an actual monopoly, was thus set at the very beginning of their role in international politics.

4.2 Absolute or Relative? Two perceptions of the role of nuclear weapons

In the development of nuclear strategy the predominance of forces of restraint is less clear than in the actual conduct of the great powers. Two traditions may be distinguished which can be traced back to the period immediately following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Was the bomb a 'winning weapon'⁷⁷⁾ or an 'absolute weapon' of which the only useful purpose could be 'to avert war'?⁷⁸⁾ These two perspectives on atomic and later on nuclear weapons⁷⁹⁾ are quite well represented by two early writers on nuclear strategy, Bernard Brodie and William Borden.⁸⁰⁾

Bernard Brodie edited in 1946 the now famous collection of essays on the nature and implications of the atomic bomb The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order, sponsored by the Institute of International Studies of Yale University. The book was a follow-up of a conference on the control of atomic energy held in September 1945 at the University of Chicago. It was attended by scientists like Leo Szilard, David Lilienthal, Eugene Rabinovich and Leo Vigner; some government officials with Henry Wallace as the most prominent; and some social scientists, among which Harold Lasswell, Jacob Viner and Brodie. The economist Viner made a clear statement at the Chicago conference about the restraining influence of the bomb:

"The atomic bomb makes surprise an unimportant element of warfare. Retaliation in equal terms is unavoidable and in this sense the atomic bomb is a war deterrent, a peace-making force."⁸¹⁾

Viner accepted Brodie's premise - then based on the assumption of scarcity of atomic warheads - that cities were the only efficient targets for nuclear weapons. In that case any country with atomic weapons would be able to retaliate, so that going first would have have no advantage at all:

"What difference will it then make whether it was country A which had its cities destroyed at 9 a.m. and country B which had its cities destroyed at 12 a.m., or the other way round?"⁸²⁾

The political scientist William Fox drew the further conclusion from Viner's 'irresistibly logical' argument that atomic weapons were no longer relative weapons as all weapons in the past had been. They had become absolute weapons. As long as one side will have enough weapons to destroy the cities of the other side, any numerical advantage in atomic bombs has no effect on the balance of power between them:

"When dealing with the absolute weapon, arguments based on relative advantage lose their point".⁸³⁾

He thus already gave a first answer to what would become later such a nagging question: How much is enough?

In his own two essays for the Absolute Weapon Brodie further elaborated on what Lawrence Freedman has called these 'inklings' of the character of the nuclear age:⁸⁵⁾

"Everything about the atomic bomb is overshadowed by the twin fact that it exists and that its destructive power is fantastically great".

That it exists. This unescapable fact that it exists and will continue to exist many people, especially in the anti-nuclear movements, still do not want to face up to, was for Brodie and his colleagues at Yale already axiomatic:

"a plan for ensuring peace had first to come to grips with the fact of everyday living with the bomb".⁸⁶⁾

This made Brodie combine Viner and Fox's arguments into the first formulation of mutual deterrence as the only rational military strategy in the nuclear age. As "one does not shoot rabbits with (scarce) elephant guns, the primary targets of atomic bombs will be cities". The number of cities and thus of critical targets is limited, so diminishing returns would set in soon. Thus 'superiority' in nuclear weaponry would no longer matter:

"If 2000 bombs in the hands of either party is enough to destroy entirely the economy of the other, the fact that one side has 6000 and the other 200⁸⁷⁾ will be of relatively small significance"

To that more precise argument for the absolute character of nuclear weapons Brodie added a very important qualification. As it was the possibility of nuclear retaliation that made surprise attack - or a first strike - useless, so that "no victory, even if guaranteed in advance - which it never is - would be worth the price", nuclear deterrence would require the survivability of the retaliatory arsenal. The bombers or missiles needed for a retaliatory attack must be separated from cities and placed in dispersed 'reservations' or stored underground. More than ten years before it came into existence Brodie already formulated the requirements of what would become the nature of the nuclear balance between the rivals: vulnerability to attack of each other's territory and society; invulnerability of their nuclear arsenals capable of a second strike; hence suicidal effect of a first strike and meaninglessness of victory in a nuclear war. In short - as it would come to be called in the early sixties - Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

In Brodie's own, by now famous formulation:

"The first and most vital step in any American security program for the age of atomic bombs is to take measures to guarantee to ourselves in case of attack the possibility of retaliation in kind. The writer in making that statement is not for the moment concerned about who will win the next war in which atomic bombs are used. Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishments has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them, It can have almost no other useful purpose."⁸⁸⁾

It should be noted that 'almost no other useful purpose' refers to the military establishments. That may explain why Brodie's views have been so slow to penetrate.

Brodie already anticipated the central argument of this study: the potential consequences for world order of the capacity of mutual retaliation as "a force from above looming over all international activity, working itself into every calculation of the risks and benefits of aggression, at least between the great powers".⁸⁹⁾ The nuclear balance could thus develop into a substitute for world government, which otherwise would be quite impossible. Brodie never elaborated further on this argument, however. It was in fact meant as an answer to the at the time quite popular pleas for an immediate transition to world government, deemed necessary for the control of atomic

weapons. But Brodie and the rest of the Yale group were convinced that only proposals or solutions departing from the continued existence of a multi-state system could have any chance of success.

Brodie did provide the military-strategic rationale for restraint in foreign policy, based on the 'absolute' character of nuclear weapons. Only when weapons are sufficiently 'relative' for military superiority to make sense, is it possible to see war as a continuation of foreign policy with other means, as Clausewitz formulated what he saw as the necessary relationship between war and politics.⁹⁰⁾ Clausewitz' formulation is in fact not just a cynical exhortation to go to war, if it pleases a state to do so. On the contrary, it means that a state should only go to war if it will benefit its national interest.⁹¹⁾ In Clausewitz' conception, therefore, absolute weapons would negate the option of going to war and demand more restraint in foreign policy than would have been necessary in pre-nuclear times. Brodie's considerations therefore thus do not contradict the conclusions of Clausewitz.

If Brodie put nuclear strategy in the context of international politics and defined its only purpose as averting war (which, it should be noted, is a broader concept than deterrence), the second way of thinking about nuclear weapons, as represented by William Borden, focussed on the military requirements of a nuclear war, which he considered as likely, if not imminent. Borden dealt with nuclear weapons as limited (and thus as relative) weapons. At the time, as Herman de Lange points out, Borden could not yet know the long-term effects of nuclear war, so his thinking in terms of 'counterforce' use of nuclear weapons and the possibility of a quick victory for the United States is more plausible than in the case of later authors who were aware of these effects.⁹²⁾ In his There will be no time: the revolution in strategy, which also appeared in 1946, Borden anticipated many themes that would be taken up again in the periods after the first Soviet bomb and the Korean war (especially in NSC-68), in the discussions about the 'bomber' and 'missile gaps' of the late fifties and sixties and in the 'window of vulnerability' scenario of the late seventies and early eighties. Borden was preoccupied by the fear of surprise attack, of a nuclear Pearl Harbour. He did not accept Viner and Brodie's thesis of the inevitability of mutual deterrence, based on the possession of invulnerable nuclear arsenals by both parties. Dictators were likely to behave in an irrational manner, so they could well overestimate the chances of success of a surprise attack, even if they would

be the weaker party. The rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States, according to Borden, would inevitably lead to war. (He kept open, however, the possibility that China, India or after their recovery Germany or Japan would become the main enemy.) At the time Borden was probably more in the mainstream of thinking about the strategic significance of the bomb than Brodie. Robert Oppenheimer, the scientific director of the Manhattan project, then described the atomic bomb as follows:

"it is a weapon for aggressors, and the elements of surprise and of terror are as intrinsic to it as are the fissionable nuclei".⁹³⁾

Given his belief in the inevitability of war and the danger of a surprise attack Borden's main interest was not the changed relation between foreign policy and military strategy, but the question how to increase American military power, especially through new technology.⁹⁴⁾ He was most concerned with strategy in the eventuality that - as it was called later - "deterrence would fail". Though he did not specify in detail the nature of the counter-force strategy he advocated, he believed that the population of cities would be spared, even though he foresaw the use of large numbers of rockets and tens of thousands of nuclear weapons. Borden did not believe in strategic bombing, though he still considered it advisable to evacuate cities in order to prevent pressures for appeasement:

"A full scale atomic war will not be won by pulverising cities and industry, though this may be done as an incidental measure, but by destroying the enemy's military power of retaliation. The tactical issues transcend the strategical".⁹⁵⁾

In Borden's vision nuclear weapons thus continued to be relative weapons. technological and military superiority would remain decisive.

Borden's perspective on nuclear weapons as finite, limited and tactical - as 'just another weapon', though with revolutionary consequences for military strategy in the warfighting sense - implied that these weapons could also be used in limited wars. In fact, nuclear weapons could restore the practice of small scale tactical attacks on enemy military targets. The 'total' character of 20th century wars could thereby be replaced by the more limited kind of war of the 18th century:

"In the eighteenth century the pattern of European warfare was a series of small-scale engagements which ignored the non-combatant civilian".⁹⁶⁾

Given the destructive character of nuclear weapons and the impossibility to avoid collateral damage Borden's emphasis on an exchange of nuclear strikes without necessarily touching cities is not very well argued and remains unconvincing. His perspective is explained by his fascination with new and exotic technologies, which could give the United States a decisive advantage. The warfighting scenario's Borden proposed - as well as their later incarnations - are based on the 'as if' assumptions of controlled and managed nuclear wars, of limiting damage and the possibility of a quick recovery. Borden denied the idea of assured destruction, as anticipated by Viner and Brodie:

"The atomic bomb is a finite weapon, and it cannot destroy the world: but it can destroy individual nations which fail to guard their freedom and treasure".⁹⁷⁾

The opposed perspective of Brodie and Borden from 1946 still represent the two basic positions in the debates about the role of military power in the nuclear age, as Theo Sommer, editor of the German weekly Die Zeit has noted.⁹⁸⁾ One can also say with Fred Kaplan (in the conclusion of his survey of American strategic thinking after 1945) that Borden tradition established by Borden, so dominant in the development of nuclear strategy, has been "the story of intellectuals ... trying to outmanoeuvre the force of (the) axioms", which Brodie formulated in 1946:

"Everything about the atom bomb is overshadowed by the twin facts that it exists and that its destructive power is fantastically great".⁹⁹⁾

To outmanoeuvre those axioms implies that nuclear weapons should be made manageable and controllable, brought down to the proportions of pre-nuclear times, so that they could be used again for political gain and for threatening and ultimately waging war. It is difficult to accept that the nuclear arsenals that provide the status of a great power are politically impotent. A primary purpose of many members of the 'strategic community' has been to transform the absolute weapon back into a relative weapon.¹⁰⁰⁾ These strategists - seeing it as their proper role to come up with recommendations for the improvement of the relative position of their own state vis a vis the opponent(s) - did not want or could not see that nuclear weapons could only be tamed or controlled through (limited) cooperation of the two rivals, based on a shared perception of a common threat. As we will see, the shock

that the two rivals could unexpectedly come to the brink of war - as the Cuban missile crisis was perceived by both great powers - was needed to put that insight into practice.

The two perspectives on nuclear weapons can be schematically represented as follows:

Perspective 1

(Brodie)

- nuclear revolution in international politics
- absolute weapon
- averting war only function
- no limited war possible, because escalation risk uncontrollable
- assured destruction
- invulnerability of second strike arsenal
- nuclear superiority meaningless
- deterrence through shared danger of nuclear war
- need for political solutions
- restraint necessary
- relation between military and political power transformed

Perspective 2

(Borden)

- powerful new weapon
- finite, tactical and thus relative weapon
- usable weapons for both political intimidation and war
- controllable tactical strikes and limited war
- limited nuclear options
- dominance at all possible levels of violence
- nuclear superiority meaningful
- deterrence through counter-force (war-fighting) capacity
- solution to be found in military technology
- restraint not necessary, if escalation dominance assured
- relation military and political power unchanged

The debate about nuclear weapons and strategy since the time of Brodie and Borden has in a sense been dominated by 'political' and 'weapons' orientations respectively.¹⁰¹⁾ But more important is that the Brodie perspective has 'won' in terms of policy and the conduct of political leaders in actual conflicts and crises, whereas the Borden orientation has most of the time 'won' in terms of the accepted rationales for weapons procurement and declaratory nuclear strategy. That ambivalent attitude towards the role of nuclear weapons may have been the background of President Eisenhower's

famous warning about the joint influence of the military and industry on the defense budget. It is certainly not the case that all military men subscribe to the relative perspective, though the traditional role of military institutions does predispose them towards that view.

In their conduct in actual conflicts and crises the great powers are restrained by the joint fear of uncontrollable escalation towards nuclear war, but their declaratory strategies and weapons arsenals are mainly geared to scenario's of actually fighting a nuclear war and coming out on top. The fear of escalation of the political leaders does not prevent strategists and the military from speculating about limited wars. Their own and their rival's meticulous observance of restraint in most area's of foreign policy does not preclude the rivals from open expressions of fear of a - in fact incredibly risky and quite unlikely - first strike by their opponent.

The actual policies and conflict conduct of the two rivals, on may say, are based on the realities of the nuclear age, as these were first described by Brodie and the members of the Yale group. But nuclear strategy and arms procurement are still primarily based on prenuclear notions and orientations. This can lead to a curious mix in the minds of political leaders. President Carter's Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, asked counterforce strategist William Kaufmann to write in his 'posture statement' for 1981 the passage which described and defended limited war-fighting options.¹⁰²⁾ But Brown apparently believed in limited nuclear options only in one compartment of his mind. He therefore inserted two sentences of his own in Kaufmann's argument:

"My own view remains that a full-scale thermonuclear exchange would constitute an unprecedented disaster for the United States and the Soviet Union. And I am not at all persuaded that what started as a demonstration, or even a tightly controlled use of the strategic forces for larger purposes, could be kept from escalating to a full-scale thermonuclear exchange."¹⁰³⁾

These sentences completely contradict the argument for limited nuclear options, which must assume that it is possible to control escalation. Brown's conflicting beliefs can only coexist, they cannot be reconciled. The only explanation for this split perspective is that Brown as a political leader and member of the President's policy making circle subscribed to the

first view, but that Brown as the Secretary of Defense, seated in the Pentagon, had to think in terms of the second view.

In the Soviet Union there has been a similar split between the political recognition of the consequences of mutual vulnerability and assured destruction and the continuation of war-fighting conceptions of nuclear strategy.

In Chapter IV the problems and dilemma's of nuclear weapons and strategy will be analysed in greater detail. In the remainder of this chapter it will be described how the 'absolute weapon' (and war) perspective of Brodie, which had to imply caution and restraint, has increasingly come to guide the actual conduct of the great powers despite the continuous expansion of their nuclear arsenals. It did require the learning process of going through crisis.

4.3 Political crises and the development of the nuclear balance

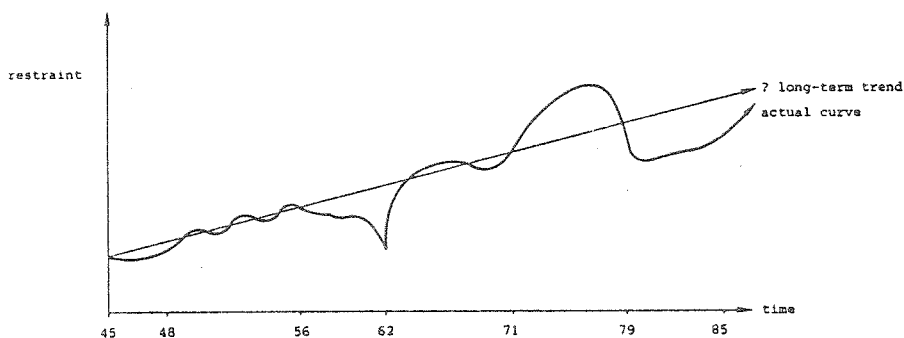
4.3.1 The nature of crises in the nuclear age

The rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States is to a large extent in the eye of the beholder. What is at issue in great power rivalry is expressed in concepts that are difficult to define in a precise manner such as national interest, national security, vital interests, commitments, military strength, military balance and superiority, the enemy's intentions and so on. These allow for widely divergent interpretations of the issues and stakes of the rivalry. Such interpretations are self-sustaining: they combine selected memories of the past with anticipations of the future in attitudes towards present problems and conflicts.

As argued before, the irreconcilable nature of the ideologies of the great powers and their shared tendency towards thinking in terms of ontological dualism (the assumption of the inherent evil of the other's 'system') applied to the world as a whole, one would have expected the development of an ever more intricate web of conflicts, increasingly sharp tensions, and at the very least, limited military confrontations between the rivals. As the Security Council of the United Nations was paralysed by the exercise of the right of veto and the lack of effective sanctions, great power competition remained as anarchical as ever and the doublebind nature of the process remained unbroken.

In that light it is remarkable that there has been no nuclear war and that not a single nuclear weapon has exploded during the past forty years. It is even more remarkable that no full scale Soviet-American nuclear alert has occurred.¹⁰⁴⁾ But the most striking fact is that there has not been any direct military confrontation between the great powers. Not one rifle volley has been fired between American and Soviet soldiers. It should also be noted that the doublebind spiral has not led to continuously increasing tensions between the great powers. On the contrary, their rivalry has fluctuated between sharpening of tensions ('Cold War') and their relaxation ('Détente'). The question is, do such fluctuations occur as part of a longer term tendency in a particular direction? When tensions increase again - as for example after 1979 - does that happen at a higher level of generalised restraint - or at a constant or perhaps even lower level?

A graphic representation of the first hypothesis may clarify this point:



The arguments in support of this hypothesis is quite strong, as will be demonstrated later. What should be stressed here is that up to now the actual development of great power rivalry in the nuclear age has deviated from the likelihood of a drift towards war and the decreasing restraint that could reasonably be expected on the basis of the theory of international politics in the prenuclear age (as continued in Chapter II).

Both great powers have usually interpreted their rivalry according to the view that has been described in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Chapter. Clark Clifford expressed it clearly already in 1946:

"The language of military power is the only language which disciples of power politics understand. The United States must use that language in order that Soviet leaders will realize that our government is determined to uphold the interests of its citizens and the rights of small countries. Compromise and concessions are considered, by the Soviets, to be evidence of weakness and they are encouraged by our 'retreats' to make new and greater demands."¹⁰⁵⁾

Though such a perspective on how to behave towards the opponent will tend to be self-fulfilling, it has not prevented the rivals from settling their conflicts in a number of crisis situations by explicit or implicit compromises and concessions.

The meaning of the 'language of military power' can only be tested in the sequences of moves and countermoves - actual and verbal - leading up to political crises in the relationship between the rivals. The conduct of the rivals in political crises is therefore crucial for understanding the development of mutual restraint. Crises are a test of will and resolve, of how far the rivals are prepared to go under the shadow of the nuclear threat.¹⁰⁶⁾ Crises are an object lesson in the nature of the danger. They can thus also influence future conduct and the mutual expectations of that. In prenuclear times a crisis often led one of the parties - the one believing himself the strongest - to send a clear ultimatum to its opponent. That practice has been abandoned in the nuclear age: in itself a sign of increased restraint and caution.

The veiled character of threats in the nuclear age has made it more difficult to decide unequivocally who has 'won' or who has 'backed down' in a crisis. But crises remain the only real tests of the risks the rivals are prepared to take in attempting to block the opponent from imposing his will.

Crises are not only tests from the perspective of the outside observer, the initiator of the particular action leading to a crisis can also intend to test the resolve of the opponent. How far will the opponent let me go? Can I get away with it? Which interests or threats to his security does the opponent see as vital? On the receiving end of the probe similar questions arise. The Munich syndrome is nothing but an overgeneralized lesson of the danger of not drawing the line early enough. Hitler's successful test of occupying the Rhineland (1936) and again the appeasement of his claims of the annexation of Sudetenland (1938) whetted his appetite for further conquest. Hitler could indeed realistically have asked himself: why would I be opposed in Poland? Munich, as was pointed out earlier, has been invoked time and time again after 1945 in support of uncompromising policies towards the Soviet Union - or Vietnam, for that matter.

In the nuclear age, however, crises have turned out to be not just tests of the resolve and the willingness to take risks of each of the opponents.

A crisis by definition implies war as one of the possible outcomes. War must be seen in the eye. As Schelling has written:

The essence of the crisis is its unpredictability. The 'crisis' that is confidently believed to involve no danger of things getting out of hand is no crisis".¹⁰⁷⁾

Crises therefore confront the political leaders of the great powers and their decision-making circle in the most direct manner with the shared danger of nuclear war. It makes clear to them that nuclear war is a common threat. It might break out and destroy them both as the unintended result of a sequence of their moves and countermoves. They may test each other out to such an extent that they may come to lose control over the process and are drawn into a gradual or sudden escalation to nuclear war. Crises in the nuclear age thus also served as a test of the danger of testing the opponent.

Testing in the nuclear age has become known by the term 'brinkmanship', popularized by Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. A state, knowing the risks of nuclear war, may believe nevertheless that it will be able to convince its opponent that its own stake is more vital and its commitment therefore more serious, so that it can safely hint at its willingness to go to the brink of war. It may be able to continue bidding in the auction of life and death longer than its opponent. Lebow has defined brinkmanship as "a policy of manipulating the shared risks of war in order to demonstrate an adversary's lack of resolve or even impotence". Brinkmanship crises develop "when a state knowingly challenges an important commitment of another state in the hope of compelling its adversary to back away from its commitment".¹⁰⁸⁾ These definitions, however, may lead to obscuring the difference between crises in which the possibility of winning a war could still play a role and crises in the nuclear age, where that is no longer the case. When nuclear war is mutually suicidal, "manipulating the shared risks of war" is a different thing than when one could still consider it possible to calculate the chances of victory of defeat.

Lebow sees two examples of brinkmanship crises between the Soviet Union and the United States: Berlin 1948 and Cuba 1962. But as we will see these are quite dissimilar. Though in both cases the Soviet Union was the initiator, challenged the United States and then backed down again, the motive of the Soviet Union and the course which the two crises took, especially in

terms of the nature of the underlying deliberations and the communication between the opponents were very different. And not only that, the effects of the two crises were diametrically opposed. The crisis over the blockade of Berlin intensified the Cold War, whereas the outcome of the Cuban missile crisis was the beginning of the the end of the Cold War.¹⁰⁹⁾ After 1962 great power rivalry became less ideological and mitigated by limited cooperation in order to reduce the danger of nuclear war. This is not contradicted by the fact that the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis was also marked by a nuclear arms build-up on both sides. That development was the combined result of first strike fears and of the continuation of prenuclear thinking about the meaning of military power, as will be discussed in Chapter IV. In this paragraph the contribution of political crises to the development of relatively stable expectations of mutual restraint will be further examined.

4.3.2. Crisis and the demarcation of vital interests

The first crisis of the nuclear age occurred when the United States still commanded a nuclear monopoly. Stalin nevertheless believed that he could challenge the commitment of the Allies to remain in Berlin. He apparently also believed that pressure on the Western position in Berlin could prevent economic reforms in and the political unification of the Western occupation zones of Germany. It was rather a case of gradual testing than of sudden brinkmanship, though the military presence of the Allies in Berlin did imply serious risks. Before the blockade of traffic over land and water to Berlin the Soviet Union had tried out lesser restrictions, that had not met serious resistance.¹¹⁰⁾ So one could perhaps go further? That turned out not to be the case. After Truman had rejected General Clay's proposal for armed convoys because it would risk a military clash, the Allies started their 'Airlift', while making it clear that they would not tolerate balloons to obstruct the landing of their airplanes. Truman combined restraint with backing up Western resolve by dispatching B 29 bombers - believed to be able to carry nuclear weapons - to Britain and Germany. When its test failed the Soviet Union quietly backed down. It did not interfere with the right to access by air and in May 1949 lifted the blockade of access over land and water.

Was this really a case of 'manipulating the shared risks of war', of attempting to bluff the opponent away by demonstrating a willingness to go to the brink of war? In retrospect, it seems no more than a rather cautious attempt to explore a specific weak point in the armour of an otherwise much stronger opponent. Much ado about nothing? Not quite, as the status of Berlin was contested again in 1958. After all, it is quite remarkable that West-Berlin has been able to survive as a small island in the Soviet-controlled part of Europe. Would that much respect for the status-quo have been likely in prenuclear times? Would Berlin's annexation then not have been more likely - or the outbreak of war over it?

Before examining the Cuban missile crisis, which has been the most and probably the only really dangerous crisis of the past forty years some attention should be given to the development of a silent agreement and rule of conduct between the great powers with respect to the mutual demarcation of vital interests. During the early fifties the Secretary of State of President Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles, could still explicitly declare that the aim of Western policy in Europe should be to 'roll-back' the Soviet-Union to its own territory. This may have been primarily intended - similar to the doctrine of 'massive retaliation' - to warn the Soviet-Union not to repeat what was considered as its Korean adventure.¹¹¹⁾ Though it is still not quite clear how the Korean war started - nor what the role of the Soviet-Union was - it is clear that it began after "American authoritative statements indicated that it would not defend Korea".¹¹²⁾ In other words, the Soviet-Union and North-Korea had good reasons to assume that South-Korea was not considered as a vital interest by the United States (as Afghanistan later). However, legitimated by the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution of the General Assembly of the UN, the United States heavily involved itself in the Korean war. Korea was then seen as the 'Rhineland' of the United States. But the Soviet-Union did not respond in kind to the American intervention: no direct military confrontation between the rivals ensued. The United States had demonstrated that it considered the preservation of an independent South-Korea against 'communist aggression' as vital after all. Similarly, China showed that it considered an independent and friendly North-Korea a vital interest for itself by entering the war after General McArthur's troops came close to its borders. On the basis of mutual acceptance of the original geographical demarcation of vital interests at the 38th parallel

the costly and militarily stalemated Korean war could then be brought to a negotiated end.¹¹³⁾ The Korean war remained 'limited', perhaps because of widespread fear and concern that it would spread against the background of the general uncertainties and war-scares of the time.

The role of vital interests - and perceptions of them - became clear again in 1953, when the West in no way attempted to utilize the uprisings in East-Berlin and the GDR as an opportunity to roll-back the Soviet Union a little. It was quite clear that any such action would result in war and would include the possibility of the use of atomic weapons. In 1950 - as stated in policy document NSC 68 - the Joint Chiefs of Staff already assumed that the Soviet Union was capable of attacking "selected targets with atomic weapons, now including the likelihood of such attacks against targets in Alaska, Canada and the United States" by refueling planes in the air.¹¹⁴⁾ They also believed that the Soviet Union could overrun Western Europe within a week.

It must be understood that lenses were clouded in the early years of the Cold War. The military designs and capacities of what was seen as a monolithic, totalitarian state able to mold its population according to will were overestimated. Reliable information was difficult to obtain, as there were no satellites yet. In those years it was not farfetched to believe that the world would become divided in two impermeable, starkly separated ideological blocs in a state of permanent latent war. Under the impact of the Korean war military planners and the public alike also began to assume that a third World War was imminent. Though the tendency to overestimate the 'Soviet threat' (the 'gaps' of later years) may have fulfilled the function of justifying an arms build-up, it also induced caution. In fact, the National Security Council accepted already in October 1953 that Eastern Europe could be freed 'only by general war or by the Russians themselves'.¹¹⁵⁾ Even if the atomic weapons of the Soviet Union in fact only held Western Europe in hostage - until the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles - the Marshallplan and the creation of NATO made clear that Western Europe was of such vital importance to the United States that this did not make any difference. Though 'roll-back' actions would thus not have been likely anyway in 1953, the West might have been less restrained - in attempting to provide aid to the insurgents, for example - if a nuclear balance had not yet come into being.

The impossibility of 'roll-back' and of giving military support to uprisings in Eastern Europe without risking escalation and war was even more starkly revealed during the Hungarian revolution of 1956 - and again confirmed later by the events in Tsecho-Slovakia and Poland. In 1956 emotions ran very high in the West, up to widespread discussion of volunteers going to fight in Hungary as they had done in Spain in 1936. In prenuclear times such a public mood could have elicited or justified a counterintervention in Hungary or actions elsewhere, for example in the Baltic states. It should be added that the West at the time was severely divided over Suez: the French-British invasion at Port-Said, strongly opposed by the United States, took place one day (5th of October) after the Soviet intervention in Hungary (4th of October).

The United States in any case did nothing about Hungary, as nothing could be done without risk of escalation. Strong rhetoric, but no actions, that would become the pattern when the symmetry of asserted vital interests on both sides of the East-West border in Europe had become clear. The nuclear balance thus already early on contributed to a clear demarcation and silent mutual recognition of vital interests in Europe, including at a later stage of the status of West-Berlin. The term 'Eastern-Europe' acquired a new meaning as including all formerly Central European countries - Poland, Tsechoslovakia and Hungary - controlled by the Soviet Union.¹¹⁶⁾ What came to be called the Sonnenfeldt-doctrine - for which its author disclaims responsibility explicitly recognized that the Soviet Union for all practical purposes had a free hand in Eastern Europe. Soviet interventions in its own power domain could only be resisted rhetorically or indirectly (by 'sanctions'), they would not lead to direct confrontations or crises. In the same way the Soviet Union could not prevent without going to war the gradual integration - and rearmament - of Western Germany into the Western network of political-military and economic organizations. In fact, the Cold War in Europe turned out to have led to nothing more than the consolidation and gradual mutual acceptance - culminating in the Helsinki agreement of 1975 - of the power domains of the Soviet Union and the United States established during the war in 1945.

Some mellowing of great power relations occurred already in the fifties, though tentative and interrupted. With the 'thaw' after the death of Stalin

began what Andre Fontaine has aptly called 'l'apprentissage de la coexistence' (the learning process of coexistence).¹¹⁷⁾ In 1955 the Soviet Union withdrew from Austria and made it possible to conclude the treaty on the establishment of the Austrian state. After a visit of Adenauer to Moscow diplomatic relations were established between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic of Germany, which had joined NATO the year before after the failure of the European Defense Community. The same year saw the first summit conference in Geneva - then still including France and Britain - which resulted in a temporary relaxation of tensions: the 'spirit of Geneva'. And though that spirit was blown away again the next year by the Soviet intervention in Hungary - and not to forget the Suez crisis - it proved to have been not completely ephemeral. Krushchev not only attacked Stalin during the Twentieth Party Congress, but asserted as well that "there is no fatal inevitability of war", which meant that peaceful coexistence of capitalism and socialism would be possible.¹¹⁸⁾ There thus appeared to be a lasting material base for the spirit first manifested in Geneva: the rivals at the time had to take into account that they both had come to possess (since 1953-54) nuclear weapons with explosive power equivalent to millions of tons TNT rather than the about twenty thousand of tons equivalent of atomic weapons. Intercontinental bombers were in use and intercontinental missiles were around the corner.

During the fifties the rivals thus came to live under the threatening shadow of the exponentially increasing destructive effects of nuclear war. Sputnik, the demonstration by the Soviet Union that it possessed intercontinental ballistic missiles, shocked the United States into a sharp awareness of its vulnerability. Nuclear weapons were transformed from what were still primarily seen as an asset to the United States into a source of threat and feelings of inferiority. Sputnik set a strong compensating effort in motion, fortified by the overestimation of Soviet missile capacity (the 'missile gap').¹¹⁹⁾ More important perhaps was the symbolic and political preoccupation with nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles of the post-Sputnik period, which made the rivals focus more on one-sided advantages or setbacks rather than on the common threat and shared danger which mutual vulnerability implied.

It took a crisis in the sense of a direct confrontation to make the rivals better understand the nature of the nuclear age and its implications for

crises. With the exception of the crisis over Berlin - and that of 1948 more than that of 1958-1961 - none of the situations perceived as crises in the period up to 1962 - the Cold War proper - had involved vital interests seen as such by both rivals, at least at first. As we have seen, in Europe the postwar order established after much posturing, rhetoric and agonizing followed the principle Stalin formulated in 1945: "This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory imposes on it its own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach".¹²⁰⁾ The reach of military power would in due time be given concrete form by the Soviet Union in the 'iron curtain' - and later the Wall in Berlin. Though these devices were at the same time a means to control its own population and protect it from the subversive influence of the more attractive societies of the West, they were also useful to the West. They served as clear lines of demarcation of vital interests and decreased the possibility that crisis situations in Eastern Europe would escalate into war. In hindsight, the anomalous position of Berlin in the postwar strategic figuration of Europe could probably only have been preserved and stabilized without repetitive crises by the construction of the wall.

During the Cold War the fear of war, whether in Europe or elsewhere, was real enough. It was primarily based on general considerations, in particular on the possibility that the superior conventional military power of the Soviet Union would be used in a surprise attack or on the assumption that the Soviet Union would be likely to use the time in which the military balance would be to its greatest advantage for a preemptive war (the 'present danger' syndrome). The specific issues leading to crises and the development of the military balance, however, were in the nuclear age less related to each other than before: they became increasingly the focus of separate universes of discourse. Political crises like Korea or Hungary were used as arguments for the need to build up military strength as they were held to prove the aggressive intentions of the rival. But the crises themselves were not directly connected with attempts to change or upset the military balance, especially not in terms of nuclear weapons. And the development of nuclear weapons followed its own logic, or rather the logic of a combination of hedging with respect to the opponent, domestic imperatives and the dictates of prenuclear thinking (to be further discussed in Chapter IV).

4.3.3 The Cuban missile crisis: origin

Was it the direct connection between a political confrontation and the nuclear balance - whether intended as such or not - that gave the Cuban missile crisis its severe character - and afterwards unintentionally transformed it into the second most important lesson of the nuclear age after Hiroshima and Nagasaki? To answer this question and to assess the influence of nuclear weapons on the course of the crisis itself it is necessary to first examine Krushchev's motives (who at the time was clearly in command, though probably not as much during the crisis itself) for placing missiles in Cuba. The conduct of the United States could only be predicated on that move itself, not on the motive behind it, but the response of the Soviet Union was, as will become clear.

How then did the crisis come about? What were Krushchev's motives and their context? As the archives of the Kremlin are and will remain shut more than the most plausible interpretation cannot be obtained.¹²¹⁾ It should then explain both the enormous risks run by the Soviet Union during a period of lessening rather than intensifying of tensions and its quick withdrawal without any attempt to first take countermeasures (such as another blockade of Berlin).

The most important motives attributed to Krushchev in the literature are the following: to improve the Soviet position in the nuclear balance; to assert its right to overseas bases; to protect Cuba against another American invasion - and other such Soviet allies in the future; to improve the Soviet bargaining position in Berlin; to assert the leadership of the socialist world towards China and to take the lead - with the cooperation of the United States - in preventing further proliferation of nuclear weapons, especially to Germany and China.¹²²⁾ Sudden though Krushchev's challenge may have been, it must in any case be seen in the longer term context of the development of the relations between the rivals. It is most probable that Krushchev took it for granted that the power balance had changed in favour of the Soviet-Union. Soviet ICBM's could now do to the United States what the United States had been able to do to the Soviet-Union more or less since 1945. Krushchev rhetorically rattled missiles already during the Suez crisis in 1956 - unsuccessfully though. After Sputnik he made such rattling (dangling is perhaps a more adequate term) standard practice, though he

usually added sweet words to threats. In July 1960 Krushchev stated that the Soviet Union could 'figuratively speaking' support Cuba with missiles against an American intervention. He may have reasoned, that in the same way as the Soviet Union felt deterred from actions against Berlin by vague American warnings (which the United States did not consider very credible), similar threats by the Soviet Union in relation to Cuba would deter the United States. Kennedy's acceptance of the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion may well have confirmed Krushchev in this belief. He also mistook Kennedy's caution and willingness to discuss problems reasonably during the Vienna summit for an admission that the United States had become weaker, and a sign that he could put the screws tighter. To some extent, Herbert Dinerstein concludes: "missiles in Cuba consolidated an established position" for Krushchev, who then "immediately leaped to the political opportunities offered by what he believed to be a mutual acceptance of a new balance of power".¹²³⁾ That new balance had to imply symmetry: it would henceforth be possible and acceptable to the United States for the Soviet Union to have overseas bases and missiles stationed on the territory of overseas allies, in the same way as the United States had overseas bases everywhere and Thor and Jupiter missiles stationed in Italy and Turkey. But according to Adam Ulam political opportunities were the decisive motive. Krushchev wanted to give form to the new equality between the United States and the Soviet Union, he argues, by the creation of a joint non-proliferation regime, which had to be imposed on the United States if it would be acceptable to China. Ulam describes the Cuban missile plan as follows:

"Sometime in late November, Krushchev would step up to the rostrum of the U.N. and confront the startled world with the news. The shock of the news would be almost immediately followed by relief, for the Soviet-Union would propose a far-reaching settlement of the outstanding world problems, a vast diminution of the danger of a nuclear conflict which had hung over the world since 1949. The U.S.S.R. would pull out the deadly weapons in exchange for the United States agreeing on a peace treaty with Germany and on atom-free zones in Central Europe and the Pacific; other countries would pledge nuclear abstinence. The Americans' bitterness at having been deceived would be assuaged by the knowledge that the Chinese rancor could be overcome by demonstrating that it was not through secret collusion with the United States but

by boldly aggressive policy that Russia was exacting this settlement.²⁴⁾

This reconstruction of the motives of the Soviet Union is more plausible than other interpretations. Krushchev has always been strongly preoccupied with 'catching up', with achieving what later would be called parity: the Soviet Union could not remain a second rate great power. Krushchev's belief in the newly gained symmetry of the respective position of the rivals in general and in Berlin and Cuba specifically implies that he initially estimated the risk and danger as less than it later appeared. Ulam's explanation brings the risk more into proportion with the stake, though the risk remains great. But if Ulam is right, as I believe, the risk of the move was less and the goal more reasonable than usually assumed. Other explanations are less convincing. The Berlin problem had been cleared with the building of the Wall and had lost any real urgency it may have had. That the missiles were needed to protect Cuba from an American invasion was, as Ulam writes, 'laughable'. After the Bay of Pigs failure there was no such immediate threat - and if the Soviet Union would have perceived an imminent danger, it could just have put Soviet soldiers in Cuba. The gentlemen's agreement at the end of the crisis that the United States would not invade Cuba, was a face-saving device for Krushchev, not a real quid pro quo.

The only remaining explanation has become the standard one. It makes the Soviet move into an act of despair rather than of wrongly assumed opportunity and strength. It imputes motives to Krushchev which seem primarily a projection of what could or would have driven the United States in a similar situation: react strongly and immediately to a presumed loss of nuclear superiority.

Briefly, the standard explanation runs as follows. By way of a speech by Deputy Secretary of Defense Rosswell Gilpatric the Kennedy Administration made public in October 1961 that the 'missile gap' did not exist and simultaneously challenged its mirror image, the exaggerated claims of Krushchev which at the time were supported by tests of huge (50 megaton) nuclear devices. Gilpatric said:

"(the) Iron Curtain is not so impenetrable as to force us to accept at face value the Kremlin's boasts...We have a second strike capability which is at least as extensive as what the Soviets can deliver by striking first."²⁵⁾

This was nothing new: even if there would have been the presumed gap in numbers of missiles the second strike capacity of the United States would have remained in full force. The Kennedy administration, however, had started a crash programme for building up the American nuclear arsenal. At the time of the Cuban crisis there was talk, especially in the Air Force, that this could lead to the United States achieving a first strike capacity. The then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara while denying that either President Kennedy or himself ever had such an intention - nor that it would have been possible to achieve - said in an interview in 1982:

"But if I had been the Soviet secretary of defense, I'd have been worried as hell about the imbalance of force. And I would have been concerned that the United States was trying to build a first strike capacity...You put these two things together: a known force disadvantage that is large enough in itself to at least support the view that the United States was planning a first strike capability and, secondly, talk among U.S.-personel that that was the objective - it would just have scared the hell out of me! That memo (McNamara's, warning Presedent Kennedy) is dated November '62. It's by coincidence a month after the Cuban missile crisis."¹²⁶⁾

McNamara, of course, suggests that this was not a coincidence after all. If so, it would indeed be an argument in support of the standard explanation of the origin of the crisis as an attempt to quickly restore the nuclear balance. According to Allison and Gaddis the missiles in Cuba could have doubled "almost overnight the Soviet Union's offensive missile capacity against the United States".¹²⁷⁾ The Soviet Union at the time possessed about 700 intermediate range missiles but only 100 ICBM's capable of reaching the United States.

The argument, however, is not as plausible as it may seem. As Ulam has answered it: "One does not risk an immediate nuclear war just to ensure that your opponent will be only twice as strong rather than four times".¹²⁸⁾ What one does rather is to start a similar long-term programme for building nuclear weapons, as the Soviet Union has indeed done. And the 100 Soviet ICBM's kept the United States in any case vulnerable. They could not be eliminated in a pre-emptive attack because American missiles were not sufficiently accurate. Numbers of missiles thus only had symbolic meaning and could not lead to a significant strategic superiority or inferiority. Even when the United States was still clearly superior the Soviet Union was never

much concerned about the possibility of an American surprise attack. That Soviet 'strategic inferiority' prompted Krushchev to put missiles in Cuba is thus quite unlikely. If the missiles would have been that strategically important to him, Krushchev would also have realized that their presence in Cuba would have been intolerable to the United States. And to be effective for their purpose they should then have remained in Cuba and would not immediately have been withdrawn. The stakes for both rivals would then have been so high as to make their moves from the outset into a confrontation of vital interests with a very great danger of nuclear war. The standard explanation thus has to assume highly irrational behaviour by the Soviet policy-makers. The explanation is also contradicted by the quick withdrawal of Krushchev when he was challenged. That makes it indeed more likely that if the Soviet move would have been successful the missiles would have been used as a bargaining lever, that they were placed there to be withdrawn again, as Ulam and Dinerstein have suggested.¹²⁹⁾ The Cuban missile crisis should then be seen as the first clear instance of triangular great power relations, or more specifically as an attempt by Krushchev "to curb China and especially to prevent or delay its emergence as a nuclear power".¹³⁰⁾ How conventional American and Soviet perceptions of that period have remained at loggerheads with each other can be illustrated by Henry Kissinger's astonishment when Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin told him "Great opportunities had been lost in Soviet-American affairs, especially between 1959-1963".¹³¹⁾ These 'great opportunities' - and that should be noted in view of what I will argue in Chapter V - in fact meant a political settlement and the beginning of a joint regime of the rivals for the control of the much feared spread of nuclear weapons.

4.3.4 The Cuban missile crisis: the thirteen days

Though the Cuban missile crisis did not originate in the development of the nuclear balance then, its trajectory was strongly influenced by the uncertainties experienced by both rivals about the strategic and political significance of mutual vulnerability. On the American side this is illustrated by the initial reaction of McNamara, who took the view (contrary to the Joint Chiefs of Staff) that the missiles did not upset the nuclear

balance - for the same reason as argued before -, but did matter for domestic political reasons.¹³²⁾ The significance of the nuclear balance is in fact not only determined by strategic realities such as the assured destruction made possible by invulnerable second strike capacities, but also by political-symbolic considerations and the leverage which perceptions of inferiority or superiority are believed to yield. Soviet missiles in Cuba were symbolically and politically a double affront to the United States. Their geographic proximity confronted the United States more directly with its new vulnerability than Soviet ICBM's had done. They also formed an infringement of the exclusive rights of the United States in its Caribbean and Central-American sphere of influence ('backyard'). There could be no symmetry in that respect between the 'overseas' bases of the Soviet Union and the United States. Krushchev made his most serious mistake in seeing the Soviet position in Cuba as identical with the position of the United States in Western Europe. The United States had and could assert vital interests in the area, the Soviet Union could not - and did not. The comparison should have been made with Eastern, not with Western Europe.

The asymmetrical balance of vital interests; Krushchev's most likely motive of creating a 'bargaining' opportunity; and the fact that the United States possessed more adequate means to assert its interests in the Cuban area itself together go far in explaining the peaceful outcome of the crisis. Krushchev's design failed in the first place because the United States prematurely discovered the construction sites for the missiles. At that time a number of missiles had already arrived, though most probably no nuclear warheads.¹³³⁾ From the American perspective these might still have been sent, however. It is quite possible that Krushchev never intended to send nuclear warheads to Cuba, if the missiles were placed to be withdrawn again when his 'harebrained scheme' - as it was called by his colleagues when he was deposited - would have been successful. Some of Kennedy's advisors later assumed that there were operational missiles with warheads present, because they were concerned that an American invasion of Cuba might not eliminate all of them quickly enough so they might be used for retaliation. But it seems in any case a confirmation of the bargaining rather than the strategic motives that the element of surprise was not utilised to the full by the Soviet Union.

Krushchev had made another mistake. Both Ambassador Dobrynin and Tass had declared in September "that there would be no ground-to-ground missiles or offensive weapons placed in Cuba", whereas President Kennedy had warned that in that case "the gravest issues would arise".¹³⁴⁾ Krushchev later hid behind the supposedly 'defensive' character and intent of the missiles. But Kennedy's reaction of startled anger was much strengthened by his feeling that he had been lied to. Kennedy felt personally challenged: "Did he have the courage in the crunch to start down a path that had a real chance of leading to nuclear war?"¹³⁵⁾ Kennedy was aware of the great risks of the Cuban confrontation though he was also convinced from the beginning on that the missiles should be removed - both for the future course of the rivalry with the Soviet Union and for his own position in domestic politics. But he always came out on the side of restraint and for leaving the Soviet Union a way out. Kennedy preferred the naval quarantine - on purpose not called 'blockade' with its warlike associations - over bombing of the missile installations and an invasion of Cuba. The quarantine itself was only capable of stopping further shipments of missiles and other military equipment to Cuba, it could not force the Soviet Union to withdraw the missiles from Cuba that were already there. The quarantine was implemented very carefully, starting with a Soviet tanker which was known to have no weapons on board and thus could be let through. The Soviet Union could have confronted the quarantine by interposing its submarines between the American ships and the missile carrying Soviet ships. But, as we will see, it did not and made its ships return in time.

At the same time as the deliberations about the American reaction intensive, though relatively slow and not always effective communication between Krushchev and Kennedy began. Though the rivals were already quite far on the road towards confrontation, such communication proved to be possible. It may be doubted whether it would have occurred in pre-nuclear times. The United States would then have had less qualms about using its military superiority to defeat the Soviet Union militarily. But though the United States may have been superior in the contested area, that did not do away with mutual vulnerability and the threat of escalation to nuclear war, if the United States would begin to fight it out. In one of his letters to Kennedy Krushchev pointed out "that we are of sound mind and understand perfectly well that if we attack you, you will respond the same way. But you too will receive the

same that you hurl against us".¹³⁶⁾ In other words, mutual vulnerability. McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's National Security Advisor emphasized that American superiority was at the time felt not to be "a usable superiority in the sense that we would ever want to go first because even if one nuclear weapon landed on an American target, we would all be losers".¹³⁷⁾ President Kennedy was equally well aware of what could happen if the crisis would run out of control. Robert Kennedy has described in Thirteen Days how his brother's attitude towards the proposals of his 14 advisors in the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExCom) was coloured by his brooding about:

"the specter of the death of the children of this country and all the world - the young people who had no role, who had no say, who knew nothing, even of the confrontation, but whose lives would be snuffed out like everyone else's. They would never have a chance to make a decision...Our generation had. But the great tragedy was that, if we erred, we erred not only for ourselves, our futures, our hopes, and our country, but for the lives, futures, hopes, and countries of those who had never been given an opportunity to play a role...to make themselves felt."¹⁴⁰⁾

After having proposed the face-saving arrangement that the missiles would be withdrawn in exchange for American assurances that it would not invade Cuba, Krushchev too warned Kennedy about the danger of unintended escalation of the crisis:

"If you have not lost your self-control and sensibly conceive what this might lead to, then, Mr. President, we and you ought not to pull on the ends of the rope in which you have tied the knot of war, because the more the two of us pull, the tighter the knot will be tied. And a moment may come when the knot will be tied so tight that not even he who tied it will not have the strength to untie it, and then it will be necessary to cut that knot, and what that would mean is not for me to explain to you, because you yourself understand perfectly of what terrible forces our countries dispose. Consequently, if there is no intention to tighten that knot, and thereby to doom the world to the catastrophe of thermonuclear war, then let us not only relax the forces pulling on the ends of the rope, let us take measures to untie that knot. We are ready for this."¹³⁹⁾

Kennedy did indeed seriously consider alarming scenario's such as the one that led in four or five steps to nuclear war. After the United States would have attacked Soviet missiles in Cuba, the Soviet Union might attack

American missiles in Italy and Turkey, NATO in turn Soviet bases, after which the Soviets fearing a preventive attack might preventively launch ICBM's and bombers: nuclear war would have started. Kennedy was also aware of the dangers of miscalculation, misunderstandings and the momentum of events.¹⁴⁰⁾ That was probably the reason why he recoiled at the last moment from reprisals for the shooting down of an American U2 reconnaissance plane over Cuba.

It is easy to play down the danger of nuclear war after the event. The course of the crisis can then be constructed as a sequence of reasonably reasonable moves and countermoves. The participants at the time, however, were rather walking on a tightrope in a dense fog.

The crisis has been called by Harold McMillan: 'a strange and still scarcely explicable affair'.¹⁴¹⁾ It came indeed suddenly and unexpected, and it could not unambiguously be explained as a confrontation arising from vital interests and intended as such. It was in that sense different from the Berlin crises of 1949 or 1958. As we saw before, the Cuban missile crisis was most probably the unintended outcome of a scheme aimed not at improving the strategic balance but at in one stroke consolidating political party, taming China and suppressing nuclear proliferation - from a position of overestimated strength. Krushchev's perspective on the changed power balance between the rivals prevented him from foreseeing how seriously the United States would take the missiles in Cuba. He did not expect that the United States would see them as a provocation, as an attempt to upset the balance of power, as a probe of President Kennedy's stamina and as a harbinger of more damaging actions to come - if not strongly resisted. The doublebind nature of the rivalry makes overestimation of intentions and capabilities of the opponent in such a way quite likely: in fact, it was much less the case than may have been expected. As we have seen the danger of unintended nuclear war worked more as a sobering than as an impassionating influence.

But the crisis was still so serious that both rivals were forced to see it as a test of will, even though the triggering move was in fact far from an act of brinkmanship, or of 'manipulating the risk of war'.¹⁴²⁾ That confronted them with the choice - or rather with repeated choices - between bending or moving a bit closer to nuclear war. The American reaction must have made it clear to Krushchev that his position was the weaker of the two, but the prestige of the Soviet Union - and of himself - could not bear a

simple unilateral withdrawal without any quid pro quo. At the same time he was confronted with the problem that any further act of confrontation by the Soviet Union - and the quarantine had shifted the responsibility for upping the ante to the Soviet Union - might bring both rivals closer to the abyss. President Kennedy was probably aware of this trap: if he left the Soviet-Union no way out, it might do something that could in turn force the United States over the hill. Krushchev's letter makes it quite clear that he saw the crisis in these terms. He attempted to reassure Kennedy of his understanding of the dangers of a direct confrontation and convince him of the reasonableness of his intentions, without of course mentioning his original motive:

"...we are normal people,...we correctly understand and correctly evaluate the situation. Consequently how can we permit the incorrect actions which you ascribe to us? Only lunatics or suicides, who themselves want to perish and to destroy the whole world before they die, could do this. We want something quite different...not to destroy your country...but despite our ideological differences, to compete peacefully, not by military means."¹⁴³⁾

In the same letter he offered to remove or destroy the missile sites if the United States would lift the blockade and give assurances that Cuba would not be attacked. Whether this was the result of the veiled threat that otherwise Cuba would be bombed and invaded or not, is difficult to say.¹⁴⁴⁾ Given what was most likely Krushchev's original motive, he may well have pulled back anyway, once he encountered such determined opposition - which could anyway - threat or no threat - have led to an American military intervention in Cuba. The Soviet Union must have been as aware of that option as the United States.

A historical reconstruction of the crisis can make it nearly self-evident that the Cuban crisis took the course it did. But, as Marc Trachtenberg points out in his introduction to a number of transcripts of the ExCom meetings of October 1962, we should remember the story about Sherlock Holmes and the significant episode of the dog in the night. "But the dog", Watson said, "did nothing in the night". That, Holmes replied, was the significant episode. The transcripts, Trachtenberg adds, are full of such 'significant episodes'.¹⁴⁵⁾ But so is the crisis itself. Again: bombing of the missile sites and/or an invasion of Cuba were options seriously discussed in the ExCom. The transcripts make clear for example that Robert Kennedy was not

the straightforward dove he was later made out to be. His arguments against air strikes were in fact made because he was in favour of an invasion. What if that would have been the initial response of the United States instead of the quarantine? Why was an invasion not chosen? The transcripts show that President Kennedy was very careful. He consistently believed that "we have to face up to the possibility of some kind of trade" (with the missiles in Turkey) and at no point opted for a course toward war, both contrary to what has been assumed by many writers.¹⁴⁶⁾ Though the fear of a countermove by the Soviet Union in Berlin - and the increased risks of escalation that would imply - weighed heavily in the ExCom's deliberations, that 'significant episode' is not a sufficient explanation for the other, the non-invasion of Cuba. It is most likely that President Kennedy's own restraint and prudence has swung the balance. If so, it makes clear how precarious the development towards a peaceful settlement in only thirteen days has been. Moves not made were as important, if not more important, than the moves that were. In that sense, the Cuban missile crisis remains "the closest approach to war the United States and the Soviet Union have ever experienced".¹⁴⁷⁾

As we have seen, the crisis was experienced as a narrow escape by both direct participants. President Kennedy himself has estimated the odds of war as 'between one out of three and even'.¹⁴⁸⁾ In their first exchange of letters Kennedy and Krushchev charged each other with actions that could lead to nuclear war. Robert Kennedy reports that during the first days of the crisis: "The feeling grew that this cup was not going to pass and that a direct military confrontation between the two great nuclear powers was inevitable". During the crisis it was clear - despite previous convictions that conventional war could be contained - "that a full-scale war could develop from their insistent demands, and that if such a war came, it would be nuclear".¹⁴⁹⁾

4.3.5 The Cuban missile crisis nuclear weapons

What has been the influence on the course of the crisis of the fact that war was no longer just war, but nuclear war? The participants in the decisions made during the crisis knew that this common danger threatened them. As Allison has defined its scope: "Had war come, it would have meant the death

of 100 million Americans, more than 100 million Russians, as well as millions of Europeans".¹⁵¹⁾ Kennedy was perfectly aware that the danger had become mutual; "They've got enough to blow us up now anyway".¹⁵²⁾

It is therefore necessary to make a distinction between the one-sided influence of the state of the nuclear weapons balance on the conduct of each of the rivals and the shared influence of the fear of nuclear war on the perception of risks and on the choice made between different options. The first refers primarily to the consequences of perceptions of military inferiority or superiority, the latter to the shaping of actual conduct in crisis by the recognition of mutual vulnerability. The latter makes it irrelevant whether one party can potentially do more damage than the other - and in that sense can be called 'superior' - as long as what the other can do has consequences terrible enough to be unacceptable, if not unthinkable. In 1962 that was already the inescapable reality which McNamara a little later - in 1964 - called Mutually Assured Destruction.

In that situation the prime danger and risk becomes unintended escalation. Even the smallest armed confrontation might lead to nuclear war. Such a risk will always remain. It cannot be eliminated and therefore cannot but strongly influence crisis conduct. The rivals are uncertain about each other's responses. They are also worried that their own response may constrain not only the alternatives of their opponents but also their own and so on, in the sense of Krushchev's metaphor of pulling the knot. As six former members of the ExCom have written:

"The gravest risk in the crisis was not that either head of government desired a major escalation but that events would produce actions, reactions or miscalculations carrying the conflict beyond the control of one or the other or both."¹⁵³⁾

President Kennedy and his advisors realized from the beginning on the importance of themselves taking the time and of giving sufficient time to the Soviet Union. If, Kennedy said, the Soviet Union would have to react in no more than "an hour or two their reactions would have been spasmodic and might have resulted in nuclear war".¹⁵⁴⁾ To thus consciously take and give time implies increased restraint.

But nevertheless things could still get out of hand. On October 27 a U2 plane on a "routine air sampling mission" strayed (probably because of a navigational error) into the airspace over the Chukotski peninsula. Soviet

MIG's attempted to intercept the U2. The American pilot asked for assistance over open radio channels, whereupon American fighter planes in Alaska immediately headed into the Bering Sea on a rescue mission. An Air Force General attached to the Joint Chiefs of Staff has reported McNamara's reaction to hearing of the incident as: "He turned absolutely white and yelled hysterically: "This means war with the Soviet Union".¹⁵⁵⁾

Fortunately the U2 managed in time to get out of Soviet airspace. But what if the American fighters would have come into contact with the Soviet fighters? And was it really an accident or the result of an unauthorized initiative of a local commander?

President Kennedy wondered, according to Theodore Sorensen, whether Krushchev may have "thought that the United States was surveying Soviet airbases for preemptive attack".¹⁵⁶⁾ Krushchev responded the next day:

"What is this, a provocation? One of your planes violates our frontier during this anxious time we are both experiencing when everything has been put into combat readiness. Is it not a fact that an intruding American plane could be easily taken for a nuclear bomber, which might put us to a fateful step...?"¹⁵⁷⁾

The Alaska U2 incident showed that not only what is at issue in the crisis itself is dangerous, but that the global military posture of the rivals includes other possibilities of unintended and unforeseen escalation.

The quarantine also gave rise to an unforeseen risk of escalation. In determining the procedures for its implementation anti-submarine operations had not been discussed.¹⁵⁸⁾ When Russian submarines were unexpectedly discovered moving into the Caribbean, the President "ordered the Navy to give highest priority to tracking the submarines and to put into effect the greatest possible safety measures to protect our own aircraft carriers and other vessels". What that would entail was not clear, nor were the 'safety measures' carefully managed by the ExCom. As Scott Sagan concludes his account of what happened:

"The available evidence suggests, that in the pressure of the crisis, there was inadequate time to review the rules of engagement for Anti Submarine Warfare forces and that the key decision-makers neither anticipated the vigour with which the Navy would pursue this mission nor fully understood what the operation would entail."¹⁵⁹⁾

Kennedy was fully aware though how dangerous any direct military action against Soviet ships, including Soviet submarines, would be. That becomes quite clear from Robert Kennedy's account of the ExCom meeting of October 24:

"It was now a few minutes after 10:00 o'clock. Secretary McNamara announced that two Russian ships, the Gagarin and the Komiles, were within a few miles of our quarantine barrier...

Then came the disturbing Navy report that a Russian submarine had moved into position between the two ships.

It had originally been planned to have a cruiser make the first interception, but, because of the increased danger, it was decided in the past few hours to send in an aircraft carrier supported by helicopters, carrying antisubmarine equipment, hovering overhead. The carrier Essex was to signal the submarine by sonar to surface and identify itself. If it refused, said Secretary McNamara, depth charges with a small explosive would be used until the submarine surfaced.

I think these few minutes were the time of gravest concern for the President. Was the world on the brink of a holocaust? Was it our error? A mistake? Was there something further that should have been done? Or not done? His hand went up to his face and covered his mouth. He opened and closed his fist. His face seemed drawn, his eyes pained, almost gray. We stared at each other across the table. For a few fleeting seconds, it was almost as though no one else was there and he was no longer the President. Inexplicably, I thought of when he was ill and almost died; when he lost his child; when we learned that our oldest brother had been killed; of personal times of strain and hurt. The voices droned on, but I didn't seem to hear anything until I heard the President say: "Isn't there some way we can avoid having our first exchange with a Russian submarine - almost anything, but that?" "No, there's too much danger to our ships. There is no alternative," said McNamara. "Our commanders have been instructed to avoid hostilities if at all possible, but this is what we must be prepared for, and this is what we must expect."⁽⁶⁰⁾

A few minutes later a report came in that the twenty Russian ships closest to the quarantine line had stopped or turned back. President Kennedy immediately gave the order that the Essex should refrain from any actions.

The episode makes clear that it would not have been difficult for the Soviet Union to put the onus for the first military action upon the United

States - and that the ExCom had not anticipated such a move, despite the carefulness of its deliberations.

The fear of escalation - as a spiral of unintended consequences, as events getting out of hand or as the result of unauthorized actions and insufficient central control - induces caution and restraint. The course of the Cuban crisis has made that quite clear. The possibility of unintended nuclear war has clearly been an constantly present consideration for both rivals.

Is that conclusion contradicted by the fact that they were also prepared to run a certain risk of nuclear war and to some extent even used that risk to affect the conduct of the opponent?

The ExCom decided after a week of debate not only to impose a 'quarantine' but also to alert both conventional forces (for an eventual air-strike at or invasion of Cuba) and strategic nuclear forces. As Sagan points out a nuclear alert serves a military and a political purpose: first to reduce the vulnerability to attack of the nuclear forces and prepare them for potential use and second to enhance deterrence, i.e. "to signal resolve and to demonstrate how seriously a government regards the stakes involved in a potential conflict".¹⁶¹⁾ Alerts are divided into five so-called Defense Condition (DEFCON) stages. The Cuban missile crisis has been one of the only three instances up to now at which American forces have been put at DEFCON 3 or more - and the only case in which the Strategic Air Command was even put on DEFCON 2 (though it is normally on DEFCON 4 and not on DEFCON 5, as all other American forces).

Apart from the assertion of vital interests - probably most important - the stated objective of the nuclear alert was to deter Soviet military countermoves to the quarantine elsewhere. Given mutual vulnerability, it is not clear, however, why that should have been presumed to work. A second motive may have been to make more convincing President Kennedy's threat of October 22 to retaliate against the Soviet Union if any missile would be launched against a target in the Western hemisphere. But that statement was made primarily for domestic consumption, to reassure the American public that the President took the Soviet action most seriously and to take the wind from the sails of the Republicans. But would Krushchev not have taken the risk of retaliation into account whether Kennedy made it explicit or not?

If the nuclear alert was intended as more than pointing out the importance of the stakes at issue, the implied threats were negative, designed to warn the opponent not to do a particular thing. At no time were positive threats issued, directed to make the opponent do something against his will. McNamara has concluded that in 1962 American superiority in numbers of nuclear weapons "was not such that it could be translated into usable military power to support political objectives"¹⁶²⁾ And six former participants in the crisis - admittedly in an argument against the revived effort of the Reagan' administration to regain nuclear superiority - have asserted: "The Cuban missile crisis illustrates not the significance but the insignificance of nuclear superiority in the face of survivable thermonuclear retaliatory forces".¹⁶³⁾ In that sense nuclear weapons are useless tools. General Maxwell Taylor, Chairman of the joint Chiefs of Staff in 1962, clearly recognizes this:

"the strategic forces of the U.S. and the USSR simply cancelled each other out as effectual instruments for influencing the outcome of the confrontation."¹⁶⁴⁾

If the authors of these statements were aware of their conclusions during the ExCom deliberations the nuclear alert was primarily a back up of resolve and assertion of vital interests - as similar references to nuclear weapons in crises have been before.¹⁶⁵⁾ The nuclear alert therefore did not contradict with the caution and restraint the fear of escalation has produced.

Both opponents, however, were prepared to take actions that did include a certain risk of nuclear war. Such an action was at the origin of the crisis and the American reaction can also be described as such. Thomas Schelling has called international politics a "competition in risk-taking, characterized not so much by tests of force as by tests of nerve", by the game of Chicken. He believes that this was confirmed by the Cuban missile crisis, which he has called "a contest in risk-taking, involving steps that would have made no sense if they led predictably and ineluctable to a major war, yet would also have made no sense if they were completely without danger".¹⁶⁶⁾ It should first be noted, however, that the Soviet Union did not play such a game. It did not place its forces on alert nor prepared them in any way for war and it withdrew its ships instead of interposing its submarines - the steps which would have been in line with Schelling's description as between predictably leading to war and being completely

without danger. That makes it already clear that Schelling's 'manipulation of risk' is not very specific and therefore does not tell much.

The questions are what kinds of risk were taken and how precisely the balance of risks and expected results can be assessed. The ExCom did not push for a test of nerves, but chose the least risky alternative that might lead to the desired result, in combination with some kind of deal (the missiles in Turkey). Only if that would not work military action might follow. Here too, President Kennedy favoured the least risky alternative, which he saw as a limited attack on the missile bases: "he just did not believe that if the missiles were destroyed, there might be a reprisal with nuclear weapons dropped from bombers, 'because obviously why would the Soviets permit nuclear war to begin under that sort of half-assed way'".¹⁶⁷⁾

If the analysis presented above is in its main lines correct, the crisis ran its course not through 'competitive risk-taking' but through a process of asserting and of recognizing the asymmetry of the stakes, while providing for a honourable way out in return. On the side of the United States it was a careful attempt to reach a limited though immutable objective with as little risk as possible and to prevent inadvertent escalation by leaving the opponent sufficient room and making a gentleman's agreement at the end. On the side of Krushchev and the Soviet Union it was not a contest in risk-taking at all, but a necessary attempt to extricate itself from an unintended predicament without too much damage to its own prestige and interests.

How important a plausible assessment of Soviet motives is becomes clear again when asking the question about the reasons for its sudden withdrawal and lack of response to the American nuclear alert. If one sees the crisis as a contest of resolve, why then did the Soviet Union bend so quickly and completely, getting no more in return than the face saving device of the protection of Cuba against an American invasion? Why didn't it make a countermove in Berlin or elsewhere? It has been argued that the Soviet Union was forced to do so, because it was strategically inferior. Marc Trachtenberg speculates that the Soviet Union took American ideas about 'damage limitation' and 'discriminate and controlled war' (which included the advocacy of preemption) more seriously than the Americans themselves.¹⁶⁸⁾ The fear of the Soviet Union would then have been greater and so their restraint. But was the Soviet Union strategically inferior or did it consider itself so? As we

saw, Krushchev was on the contrary convinced that mutual vulnerability had equalized the strategic balance. It is therefore more plausible that the balance between stake and risk in Cuba was different for Krushchev than for Kennedy. Once his original aim was frustrated by the discovery of the missiles and Kennedy had made clear how serious he took the missiles, Krushchev's conduct became more risk-avoiding than Kennedy's.

That asymmetry between the rivals was quite favourable for a peaceful outcome. Still the crisis was terribly dangerous. Both rivals moved with caution and considerable circumspection. The United States took care not to force the Soviet Union into escalating countermoves, the Soviet Union - or rather Krushchev - avoided doing anything that could move the United States further up the escalation ladder and thus the Soviet Union also. But as we have seen, there were remained a number of incidents that could easily have made the crisis run out of control.

4.3.6 The Cuban missile crisis: consequences

I have devoted so much space to the Cuban missile crisis because it has been the most dangerous confrontation between the rivals since 1945 and the only one that was perceived as having brought the rivals to the brink of nuclear war. It is very important to note that the crisis conduct of the rivals was mostly not in line with what the doublebind character of their relationship would have led to expect. The shared danger of nuclear war did not make the decision-makers into helpless victims of their fears, forced to react emotionally and so making the threat even more serious. The American participants in the ExCom sometimes overestimated the threat from their rival - the long-term design of making Cuba as into an offensive base; the likelihood of Soviet countermoves elsewhere - but given the fact that the ExCom had no real inkling of what the motives behind the deployment of missiles in Cuba were, its decisions were based on a quite realistic analysis of the situation. After his own scheme failed, Krushchev also behaved in a realistic manner. If that is so, the shared fear of the possibility that any direct military confrontation (or events such as the U2 incident or the ASW action against Soviet submarines) might escalate to nuclear war and mutual destruction, led during the crisis not to risk-manipulation but to risk-avoidance, to increased self-restraint.

The Cuban missile crisis can be seen as the final multiple choice examination of 'l'apprentissage de la coexistence'. The rivals managed to pass the test. But they had drifted to the edge of the nuclear maelstrom and had returned much chastened from that harrowing experience.¹⁶⁹⁾

The crisis was in many ways an object lesson. It demonstrated the danger of any move against interests which the opponent might consider to be vital. In such situations it makes no sense to bluff: when even mildly challenged the imbalance of the stakes is sufficient to make one withdraw. If Krushchev's move was to be considered as a bluff, the rivals have since then carefully refrained from similar actions. If a confrontation develops to the level of the Cuban missile crisis, it demands unprecedented restraint on both sides in order to stem the escalation process. Such a crisis places the decision-makers under great stress, which is difficult to maintain for a long time. It also subjects them to the pressures of 'groupthink', which may foreclose certain options.¹⁷⁰⁾ Both pressures could well lead the rivals in the direction of taking larger risks than during the Cuban crisis. Pulling too hard on the knot may lead to unintended escalation.¹⁷¹⁾ And even if sufficient restraint is exercised to keep the crisis under control, there is still the danger of accidental escalation, as the examples of the Alaskan U2 and the unforeseen consequences of anti-submarine warfare had demonstrated. There may be many kinds of bureaucratic rigidities and organisational problems which make it very difficult to maintain at all times central control, which may lead to the confrontation getting out of hand. During the Cuban missile crisis Kennedy and Krushchev kept regarding each other as rational men: that too was not self-evident.

The main lesson from these manifold dangers experienced during the crisis was therefore "in both capitals to avoid a similar eyeball to eyeball confrontation in the future".¹⁷²⁾ The need for crisis prevention and a lessening of mutual suspicion was clearly expressed in statements and editorials on both sides. The Soviet journal New Times wrote, for example:

"Pushed to the brink of thermonuclear abyss, the world has recoiled in horror; and of the horror has been born a determination to save the peace at all costs, to get tensions eased and the international climate normalized."¹⁷³⁾

President Kennedy gave his famous speech at the American University in Washington in which he made a plea for the stabilizing of strategic relations - very important in the light of the American interpretation of Krushchev's motives - and characterized the relations between the rivals as

"caught up in vicious and dangerous cycle in which suspicion on one side breeds suspicion on the other, and new weapons beget counter-weapons."¹⁷⁴⁾

In that sense the Cold War came to an end with the Cuban crisis. The rivalry continued, but in a mitigated manner. The great powers had been confronted with the fact that the closer they came to war, the clearer their common interests became:

"They began as rivals, and yet as the crisis unfolded so they became increasingly like climbers on a rock-face - if one fell, the other fell too, so fragile were their holds and so insecure the lines with which they sought to save themselves."¹⁷⁵⁾

The Cuban missile crisis made the great powers realize that crises in the nuclear age were different from pre-nuclear crises. These "could be regarded as almost pure competition, in which the interests and motives of the adversaries overlapped to a minor extent if at all, (whereas) in nuclear crises the motives...are likely to be far more mixed".¹⁷⁶⁾ During crises in the nuclear age the antagonists are on the one hand forced to take risks and show resolve in order to signal that they consider the stake at issue as vital and on the other hand to minimize those risks and show restraint. Stanley Hoffman has described the difference by saying that though the great powers are still forced to play the chicken game, they are extremely concerned with constantly keeping their feet over the brake pedal.¹⁷⁷⁾ Really playing chicken by directly confronting each other, however, has become wrought with so much danger of unintended and accidental escalation that it becomes impossibly dangerous. The only conclusion is that it is better to avoid or prevent such direct confrontations through more adequate communication, formal and informal agreements and above all through increased restraint and risk-avoiding conduct.

The rivals have indeed behaved since 1962 according to the prescription: keep conflicts below the crisis level; do not behave in such a manner as to force the opponent into direct confrontation. The Cuban missile crisis thus has led to more than improved crisis management, and measures to prevent accidental or unintentional war, it has also led to a pattern of conduct of the rivals shaped by the need for crisis prevention. That aim has even

been incorporated in a formal Agreement on the Prevention of nuclear War, concluded on June 22, 1973: Article 1 says:

"...the Parties agree that they will act in such a manner as to prevent the development of situations capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations, as to avoid military confrontations, and as to exclude the outbreak of nuclear war between them and ¹⁷⁸⁾ between either of the Parties and other countries."

The general result of the Cuban missile crisis has thus been to make the rivals much more aware of the nature and danger of competition in the nuclear age and the need for restraint and for certain kinds of cooperation. One immediate result has been that after the Cuban crisis the status of West Berlin has been accepted by the Soviet Union: nothing was heard anymore about a separate peace treaty with the GDR or about hampering access to Berlin. In 1963 the United States for the first time sold large quantities of wheat to the Soviet Union to ease its difficult food situation - and thereby implicitly strengthened the resource base of its opponent. In that way the Cuban missile crisis created the necessary conditions for success of the 'Ostpolitik' of Willy Brandt's government and the subsequent consolidation of the European status quo in the Helsinki-agreement of 1975.

There have also been more specific effects of the learning process which the crisis constituted. The improvement of the political climate after the successful resolution of the crisis created the conditions for ending what had already for a number of years been a source of serious public concern (and the main motive for the first large-scale anti-nuclear movements): the tests with huge thermonuclear weapons. A partial Test-Ban Treaty was signed in August 1963, banning all nuclear tests except those below the surface of the earth. This was the first arms control treaty concluded between nuclear powers (the United Kingdom participated, France and China did not).¹⁷⁹⁾

At least as important has been the so-called Hot Line agreement of June 1963, providing a 'direct communications link' between Moscow and Washington.¹⁸⁰⁾ The importance of fast and reliable communication during a crisis in order to avoid accidental escalation, misunderstanding of intentions or unnecessary time pressures had been very clear in 1962. The hot line agreement, one can say, was the first tangible expression of the common interests of the rivals.

An important function of the partial Test Ban treaty was to stem the further spread of nuclear weapons. Both great powers became increasingly concerned with that problem. In fact, the most plausible motive of Krushchev for installing missiles on Cuba was his scenario for curbing nuclear proliferation, notably to Germany and China. The spread of nuclear weapons is seen by both rivals as one of the most likely sources - through inadvertent spill-over of nuclear war. The prevention of nuclear proliferation is thus one of the most clear instances of a common interest between them. If the proposal for a multilateral nuclear force (MLF) within NATO would not have been a major obstacle for the Soviet Union a non-proliferation treaty might already have been concluded in 1964. When it became clear that the MLF would fail the United States and the Soviet Union in 1966 could quickly prepare a draft text for a treaty. This formed the basis first for discussions within NATO and then in the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee and the General Assembly of the UN. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed on July 1, 1968 by the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and 59 other countries (not by China and France). To date it has 131 signatories.¹⁸¹⁾ The problem of nuclear proliferation will be further discussed in Chapter V. Here it should only be noted that it forms the area in which the United States and the Soviet Union have probably the strongest incentive for cooperation. Since 1967 they have had no serious disputes over this aspect of arms control.

It took longer for the arms control process to extend to the development of weapons systems of the rivals themselves, sometimes called 'vertical proliferation'. Though the preamble to the Non-Proliferation Treaty mentions the intention of the signatories to "achieve at the earliest possible date the cessation of the nuclear arms race" and "the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons" (thereby leaving open the possibility of joint arsenals for peacekeeping), those remained pious words. Nevertheless, the control of strategic arms competition was put on the agenda already in 1964, when the United States proposed in Geneva to "explore a verified freeze of the number and characteristics of their strategic nuclear offensive and defensive vehicles".¹⁸²⁾ However, in order for a freeze to become possible, both rivals should perceive the balance of their arsenals to be sufficiently symmetrical. None should be clearly ahead or behind. As we have seen, that was not yet the case at the time of the Cuban missile crisis. The United

States had expanded its strategic weapons to such an extent that speculations about a first strike capability could arise. The Soviet Union in response embarked on a long term programme of building many kinds of nuclear weapons, which gave it rough parity with the United States at the end of the sixties. At the same time both rivals were beginning to develop and deploy limited Anti-Ballistic Missile systems. If they would not be able to jointly halt that process they would feel forced to continue a very costly effort, which would be useless to boot, as mutual vulnerability and unvulnerable second strike capacities would not be affected. The conditions for direct arms control were therefore at the time quite auspicious and so the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks could start in November 1969, during the first year of Nixon's presidency. After the most important hurdle of perceived asymmetry - the so-called forward-based (i.e. in Western Europe) nuclear systems of the United States - was taken, Brezhnev and Nixon signed two treaties in Moscow in May 1972: the second limiting ABM-systems to one at each side and the other to limiting ICBM's and SLBM's to agreed upon numbers. The aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis thus also saw the beginning of 'quantitative' arms control, SALT I. Though, as we will see in Chapter IV, it proved to be much more difficult - and according to some even counterproductive - such arms control has remained firmly on the agenda. The negotiations did have important side-benefits such as creating mutual understanding of each other's strategic thinking and keeping the rivals in structured and organised contact with each other.

The curious result of the continued attention given to arms control is that it has become one of the most important sources of disagreement and tension between the rivals (SALT II). Because of the ongoing competition in research and development of new weapons systems no real freeze was possible as yet. Arms control did become a framework for dealing with this competition, though it cannot be said to have been very successful. Still, it has become a routine policy alternative in dealing with problems like the development of chemical weapons, the balance of conventional forces or the development of anti-tactical ballistic missiles (ATBM), to mention a few recent examples. Arms control as a policy alternative was also at the origin of the so-called double track decision of NATO in December 1979, in which the deployment of intermediate range nuclear weapons in a number of Western

European countries was tied to the success or failure of arms control negotiations. Whether that was a sound idea or not is irrelevant for my present argument. It does show the extent to which arms control has become incorporated in policy making. That has also created domestic pressures for arms control. Michael Mandelbaum has argued that the constraints of the 'nuclear presidency' pull any American President towards arms control, particularly at the end of their term.¹⁸³⁾ President Reagan proved him right, at least in his first term of office.

Arms control has recently come under strong criticism, because in its present form it is tied to the assumption of the durability of mutual vulnerability and thus to the acceptance of the limited political role of military power. Those who wish to undo these properties of the nuclear age have to criticize arms control. But the point here is just to show to what extent the forced recognition of the realities of the nuclear age during the Cuban missile crisis has contributed to changing the pattern of great power rivalry.

One more consequence should be mentioned. The criticism of the doctrine of 'massive retaliation' during the last years of the Eisenhower administration - taken over by President Kennedy - gave rise to much speculation and discussion about the possibilities and advantages of 'limited war' in which the use of violence would be carefully controlled and held below the threshold of either nuclear weapons altogether or below the use of strategic nuclear weapons (limited nuclear war). The deliberations and conduct of the ExCom during the Cuban crisis shows that in a real crisis the fear of escalation clearly prevailed.¹⁸⁴⁾ The limited war conception was not discussed at all. Though 'limited war' ideas continued to play a role in nuclear strategy and the justification of weapons acquisition, they could no longer be entertained as a serious policy option after the Cuban missile crisis. As Lawrence Freedman has written:

"Despite preparations for nuclear war as if it could be tamed and controlled, it is probably the fear of the whole process getting out of control that is the strongest source of caution in the modern world."¹⁸⁵⁾

The Cuban crisis had given substance to that lurking fear. The wide spectrum of consequences of the Cuban missile crisis demonstrates that its significance for the course of great power rivalry can hardly be overestimated.

The available evidence as discussed above makes it most plausible that in this case post hoc is propter hoc.

This does not imply that the rivals will necessarily continue to respect the demands of crisis prevention. It does mean that the chance that they will do so is very great, in any case as long as mutual vulnerability will remain assured (that this is likely in the foreseeable future will be argued in Chapter IV). In theory, the more uncertain the balance of vulnerability becomes, the greater the chance that the rivals may once again resort to bluffing behaviour or preemption. It should always be remembered, though, that in the nuclear age the consequences of taking even the smallest risk can be so terrible that it is nearly impossible for any gain to be so vital that a cost-benefit analysis will make sense. In practice, therefore, mutual restraint may well withstand a considerable degree of instability of the strategic balance.

Crisis prevention and mutual restraint during conflicts do not imply either that great power rivalry is as yet under control. The great powers remain involved in a struggle for hegemony and perceive each other with the suspicion that is inherent in it. The persistence of that doublebind situation explains the continuation of arms competition and the tendency towards worst case nuclear strategy and prenuclear thinking more generally. In fact, nuclear arms competition has acquired a certain autonomy with respect to the state of political relations between the rivals. The rivals may have even become so certain of each other's restraint that they can allow themselves both a rhetoric of confrontation - often useful for domestic purposes - and giving relatively free rein to the development of new weapons and to the rhetorical nuclear strategies these presuppose or have to justify.

The present silent rules of crisis prevention make nuclear arsenals even more politically impotent in the sense that they cannot be used for positive political purposes, so that their only utility is in their non-use, as Bernard Brodie has formulated it.¹⁸⁶⁾ That impotence is difficult to accept for those who seek an active strategy in the pursuit of hegemony. This explains the continuous attraction of 'nuclear superiority' or the recent hopes of achieving a secure defense against all nuclear attacks.

Though the expectations of mutual restraint are still to some extent precarious, they are less so than is often supposed. The Cuban missile crisis can therefore be said to have really inaugurated the nuclear age by

forcing upon the rivals a number of important rules and patterns of conduct appropriate to it.

4.4 Regulation Principles of Rivalry in the Nuclear Age

The rivalry between the great powers clearly continued after the end of the 'Cold War' in 1962. But it was tacitly controlled by the necessity of crisis prevention. This did not presuppose a continuous improvement of the political relations between the rivals, as the short-lived period of 'détente' in the seventies has demonstrated. Fluctuations in the level of tension between the rivals, however, did not affect their mutual expectations of restraint and prudent conduct.

As the rivals continue to pursue what they regard as their interests and to frustrate those of their opponent, the question arises in what cases or situations and to what extent they either feel forced to restrain themselves or can be persuaded or compelled by their opponent to do so. In the Cuban missile crisis the degree of asymmetry of interests has been crucial. The United States perceived its vital interests to be at stake in Cuba, the Soviet Union did not.¹⁸⁷⁾

The demarcation or assertion of vital interests as a regulating principle leaves open many problems of interpretation - and perception - and its implications are therefore not self-evident. Vital interests are not given and immutable, they have to be established and accepted, sometimes by trial and error. They are properties of the development of the relationship between the rivals. The global nature of the rivalry implies that there remain dangerously 'grey' cases. Still, demarcation and mutual recognition of 'vital interests', not so much as an 'objective' category, but as a consequence of the political commitments or military involvements of the rivals was necessary for preventing a repetition of a crisis on the level of confrontation of the Cuban missile crisis.

The process of learning to coexist was at first primarily confined to Europe. The building of the Wall in Berlin consolidated the geographical and physical demarcation between Eastern and Western Europe as a new kind of untouchable security units. The vital interests of the rivals in Europe were no longer open to any doubt. Europe became the part of the world in which an armed conflict became least likely. It may seem paradoxical that it is at

the same time the area where the largest armies face each other. That is indeed a clear example of the way in which the military balance develops in relative autonomy from the state of political relations.

Competition between the rivals in the Third World is in principle more dangerous because the interests of the rivals are less vital and much less clearly demarcated there than in Europe. Control of the Third World was perceived, however, by both rivals as the asset that could be decisive in their struggle for hegemony. Hence the domino theory on the side of the United States and the support for 'wars of national liberation' by the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁸⁾ Both great powers, however, have tended to underestimate the strength of national self-assertion in Asia, Africa and Latin-America, which formed an obstacle to their dreams and made their fears unwarranted.

Nevertheless, the rivals continued to regard the Third World as an area open for their active competition for strategic positions and for political, ideological and economic influence. The Third World therefore became the area in which expansion-containment conduct became most clear. At the same time it became the most important possible source of direct confrontation and dangerous crises. Though the conflict potential was therefore very high in the Third World, the rivals have managed to avoid a repetition of the Cuban missile crisis. Both rivals have militarily intervened in the Third World, but the number of direct confrontations has been surprisingly small. The only real crisis in the sense that the United States put its strategic nuclear forces on alert (DEFCON 3) occurred during the Middle East war of 1973 and was very short-lived.¹⁸⁹⁾

How then did the rivals cope with the problem of their duality of purpose, with finding a balance between the active pursuit of their competition in the Third World and the need for crisis prevention? The clue is to be found again in the nature of the balance between their - perceived or asserted - vital interests. It is, of course, impossible to make objective distinctions between vital and less vital interests. By making strong commitments an interest initially not easy to justify as vital can become a vital interest respected as such by the rival. The American intervention in Vietnam is a case in point.¹⁹⁰⁾ An interest leading to military intervention may become de facto respected as vital or strong by the other rival if it has no vital interest there itself. Such was also the case with the American reaction to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

The pattern of coping with the duality of purpose can be illuminated by distinguishing between four possible balances of interests resulting from the two rivals having or not having vital interests in specific regions or countries:

		Soviet Union	
		yes	no
United States	yes	A yes, yes	B no, yes
	no	C yes, no	D no, no

Again, it is difficult to objectively ascertain which interests are to be considered 'vital'. The concept may in that sense be vague, it becomes clear enough in practice. Vital interests can be roughly circumscribed as those interests that are perceived as directly connected to the survival of a particular state-society in its existing form and position in the international hierarchy, in other words as a great power or as a parliamentary democracy and 'socialist' state respectively. The perception of vital interests is therefore influenced both by the nature of the national we-image of a state and by the structure of its relations with other states. The first element can make the rivals perceive some particular aim as a vital interest which may in fact turn out to have run counter to their power and prestige. But debates about specific perceptions of interest have only a limited relevance for the problem under discussion here. What the rivals can convincingly assert as vital to each other counts - and that must have some objective economic, political or military basis.

The meaning of vital interests for crisis prevention will become clearer if we examine the four possible combinations distinguished above. In the first category (A) both rivals have vital interests. But in the Third World they are not as clearly demarcated as in Europe. The Middle East is the best example. The United States has declared the survival of Israel to be a vital interest and the Soviet Union has committed itself by treaty to the defense of Syria (though with some proviso's). For both rivals the problem is that

they consider it vital that the area will not come under the complete control of the opponent, but they are at the same time afraid that the conflict between the Arab states and Israel might escalate into a direct confrontation between themselves. Given the limited control the rivals have over their allies, that is indeed a real danger. Curiously enough, the only crisis situation that developed in the Middle East - at the same time the most direct confrontation between the rivals anywhere in the Third World since 1962 - developed out of an appeal by President Sadat to the great powers to send troops to Egypt in order to enforce a cease-fire both had sponsored.¹⁹¹⁾ The crisis came about, because the American government feared (overperception?) that Soviet troops would not be removed afterwards. As Secretary of State Kissinger said: "there would be endless pretexts for the Soviet force to intervene at any point against Israel, or against moderate Arab governments, for that matter".¹⁹²⁾ In other words, the United States considered that its position in the Middle East might be drastically undermined if the Soviet Union would send troops to Egypt, and it saw that position as vital for the global power balance between the rivals. Such was the reason for the nuclear alert and for subsequent statements addressed to the Soviet Union Secretary Henry Kissinger about the horrendous consequences of nuclear war. In that way as Barry Blechman and Douglas Hart say, "the United States was demonstrating and making credible the vital stake it perceived in the situation".¹⁹³⁾ Rather than "manipulating the risks of nuclear war" it was a case of asserting and demarcating vital interests and thus creating an asymmetrical balance of interests. That carried weight and was not just bluff because Soviet troops in Egypt could indeed have upset the existing power balance between the rivals in the Middle East, even though Kissinger probably exaggerated its effects.

Blechman and Hart give a somewhat different interpretation in which they extend the meaning of the nuclear alert to having been a signal that the United States was prepared to play chicken:

"If you persist in your current activity, if you actually go ahead and land forces in Egypt, you will initiate an interactive process between our armed forces whose end results are not clear, but which could be devastating. Moreover, the United States feels so strongly about this issue that it is prepared to participate in the escalatory process until its objectives are achieved. The United States is prepared to continue escalating the confrontation

up to and including a central nuclear exchange between us, even though we understand that the consequences of such an interaction potentially are 'incalculable'." (1974)

This may have been the reasoning behind the move, but if so, it would have been an overdose of a very dangerous medicine, because the stake was not that vital for the serious consideration - or the message - of being prepared to escalate to 'a central nuclear exchange' to make any sense. Could that have been the same Kissinger that considered it unlikely that the United States would be prepared to initiate a 'central nuclear exchange' for the defense of Western Europe? It is not very likely. That the meaning of the signal was probably more modest is also indicated by the conciliatory moves the United States was making at the same time. The Soviet Union, on its side, may have intended its threat to send troops to Egypt only to make the United States put pressure on Israel to respect the cease-fire and not destroy the Egyptian third army, as it could have done. In any case, the Soviet-Union did not send troops but only a few observers to monitor Israel's compliance of the cease fire. Soon, a UN peace keeping force was sent to Egypt, excluding both rivals. The crisis was over within 48 hours.

Nevertheless, the 1973 crisis demonstrated that regions in which vital interests of the rivals stand opposed and are not clearly demarcated are potentially the most dangerous. It also showed that assertion of vital interests can go quite far if there are sufficiently convincing grounds for acceptance. It then depends on the restraint of the other rival to keep the confrontation under control. If what is perceived as bluff is being called, escalation becomes possible. As long as the balance between (vital) interests can be made and accepted as asymmetrical that is unlikely. The 1973 crisis thus also demonstrated the danger of showing resolve without clearly having a higher stake than the opponent. Whether that lesson has been learned is difficult to say. What can be said is that it has not happened again, neither in the Middle East nor anywhere else. After 1973, the search for a durable peace in the Middle East has been intensified, without much success though it has kept the conflict in the Middle East within bounds, at least as far as the rivals are concerned. But the rival's duality of purpose makes the Middle East still the most dangerous region in the world.

The second category (B) consists of cases in which the United States has a vital interest, but the Soviet Union not - or much less. The Cuban missile crisis falls within that category - and since then the Central-American and Caribbean region as a whole. The United States looks upon that region as its 'backyard' in which trespassing is not allowed. Though the Soviet Union has a high stake in the preservation of Cuba as a socialist ally, it refrains from giving substantial support to Nicaragua or to other countries in the region. The demarcation of interests agreed upon at the end of the Cuban missile crisis is still respected. It is highly unlikely that the Soviet Union would react with much more than rhetoric to an American military intervention in Nicaragua. The United States is held back from such an intervention more by domestic political considerations than by the possibility of a military confrontation with the Soviet-Union. The United States has also much more military power in the region than the Soviet Union.

Did the American intervention in Vietnam belong to this category? Can one argue that American interests were that much more vital there than those of the Soviet Union? If not, why then did the Soviet Union give so much leeway to the United States, putting up no active resistance against the regular bombing of its ally North-Vietnam to the massive build-up of the American army in South-Vietnam or even to the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong, including the mining of Haiphong harbour? At the time the latter action was regarded as an attempt to prevent further supply of arms to North-Vietnam by the Soviet-Union, as a direct challenge. The reaction of the Soviet Union was unexpectedly mild, however, and remained confined to verbal condemnation. According to Phil Williams, Secretary Kissinger may have convinced the Russian leaders during his visit to Moscow just before that the mining should be seen as no more than a necessary face-saving device for the United States in response to the renewed North-Vietnamese offensive in the South.¹⁹⁵⁾ That would help to explain why President Nixon two weeks after this act of military confrontation could travel to Moscow and sign the SALT I and ABM treaties with Secretary Brezhnev.

Though the Soviet Union has continuously supplied North Vietnam with arms - in part because of competition with China - it did not directly supply arms to the guerrilla's in the South. Neither did it send any of its own troops to the North in response to the half million of American troops that

had arrived in the South by 1968. Though the Soviet Union had achieved nuclear parity with the United States by then, it behaved with respect to Vietnam as if the stake for the United States was higher. It exercised greater restraint than the United States, perhaps because it saw its rival being defeated or in general, because it did not want to take any risk of a direct confrontation. The United States did restrain itself too - and according to some for that reason lost the war. Though there was at times talk about the possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons, this was never considered as a serious policy option.¹⁹⁶⁾ More importantly though, though the United States did bomb North Vietnam, an ally of the Soviet Union, it consistently ruled out an invasion. Then the survival of North Vietnam would have been at stake. An invasion would have implied a serious risk of a direct military confrontation - and of nuclear war. The United States could therefore not have won the war in Vietnam.

If one of the rivals militarily involves itself in a country which is clearly in its own sphere of influence, there will thus be no opposition to such an intervention from the other. Clear examples of this can be found in the third category (C) in which the Soviet Union has vital interests and the United States has not. Particularly in Eastern Europe, the Soviet-Union does not have to expect greater opposition to military intervention than strong rhetoric and some sanctions. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan did not raise much more than strong condemnation either, though it did cause a considerable worsening of the political climate between the rivals because it was considered in the West as a sign of the inherent and far-reaching expansionsism of the Soviet Union. But the asymmetrical balance of interests and Afghanistan's geographical proximity to the Soviet Union made it certain enough for the Soviet Union that it could get away with the intervention without running great risks. Until recently the United States only supplied the Afghan resistance with weapons indirectly.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was interpreted by the United States, however, as a possible first step to the conquest of the Persian Gulf and the oil supplies of Western Europe. Fear of this scenario - publicized as "the Present Danger"¹⁹⁷⁾ - led president Carter to making a speech in which he clearly asserted the vital interests of the West in the Gulf and said that the United States would be prepared to defend its interests in the Gulf with all possible kinds of weapons. Such a veiled reference

to the danger of nuclear war served a similar purpose as the nuclear alert in 1973. It resulted in a clearer demarcation of vital interests in the area. That is an important condition for crisis prevention, though it may be argued that the Soviet-Union would have recognized the imbalance of interests in the Gulf anyway.

The last category (D) consists of situations and areas in which none of the rivals has a vital interest, but in which nevertheless both can become involved. A clear example of such a case is the war between Iran and Iraq. In pre-nuclear times the rivals might have been tempted to support one of the two, in order to obtain a new strategic stronghold, and thus have entangled themselves in the war. Now the rivals have scrupulously abstained themselves from support or any other involvement with one of the parties, because the other rival might then support the opponent - and a confrontation might ensue. But they have gone even further: they have discussed together how to react if the war might escalate or spill over to other countries in the region. They have thus prepared themselves for situations in which it could become necessary to prevent a crisis. This occurred at a time (1983) when the political relations between the rivals were quite bad. It is therefore a good example of the continuing importance the rivals give to crisis prevention and assuring mutual restraint in conflict conduct. It is also a hopeful precedent for the handling of future similar conflicts, such as a possible war between India and Pakistan.

Though the regulation principles are different - and more or less tenuous - in each of the four categories, they have worked well enough to prevent crises and the spill-over of conflicts in the Third World.

Of the four categories the first, opposing vital interests, is no doubt the most dangerous. The Middle East and probably Southern Africa in the future will be the regions in which most will be demanded from the restraint of the great powers. A special case is formed by South-East Asia in which the deadlock over Cambodia is a function of trilateral competition between the Soviet-Union, China and the United States. That stabilizes the region for the time being, but a triangular relationship also has a high conflict-potential.

Given the plethora of possible conflicts within and between Third World countries and the lack of a clear demarcation of vital interests of the great powers in the Third World the low incidence of direct confrontations

and crisis situations is remarkable. One can only speculate what would have happened if the fear of nuclear war would not have compelled the rivals to restrain themselves and to develop some rudimentary regulation principles, keeping the struggle for hegemony within bounds.

5.1. Conclusion I

Forces Making for Mutual Restraint

The unprecedented destructive power of nuclear weapons, as demonstrated by the fate of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, imbued the American leaders from the beginning on (and their Soviet counterparts later) with a strong sense that these were not weapons that could be used - militarily or politically - in the same way as pre-nuclear weapons. Moral restraint and practical considerations - the failure of strategic bombing - combined in the rejection of any serious consideration of preventive war against the Soviet Union. The United States passed its 'window of opportunity' by and never directly threatened the Soviet Union with atomic weapons. The moral restraint or 'repugnance' with respect to the effect of the possible use of these weapons was reinforced by taking into consideration the consequences for 'international relations', i.e., for global role and the reputation of the United States in terms of the exemplary function that nation was deemed to fulfill in the world. Their reputation is indeed important for both great powers, if only because of the missionary character and legitimating functions of their national ideologies. The low expectations of war entertained by the leaders of both rivals may also have contributed to the development of more stable mutual restraint.

To these early forces for restraint the development of the nuclear balance towards a combination of mutual vulnerability and invulnerable second strike capacities - or Mutually Assured Destruction - added more compelling forces for restraint. For the first time in history the political and military leaders became certain that they themselves, their families and their friends would become victims in a nuclear war. The reality of MAD depends on the nature of the arsenals, and need not be reflected in the nuclear strategies of the rivals to shape their conduct. If only for that reason, mutual vulnerability is the least dangerous military-strategic situation in the nuclear age.

The rivals learned in the Cuban missile crisis that the possibility that any direct military confrontation between them can escalate towards the mutual destruction of nuclear war necessitates a high degree of restraint and a minimizing of risks during crises. But the Cuban missile crisis demonstrated also that peaceful resolution of crises at that level of intensity depends not only on mutual restraint but also on being lucky enough to avoid accidental escalation. The shared fear of nuclear war combined with that certainty of uncertainty therefore compelled the rivals not just to restrained conduct during crises, but also to prevent crises, to avoid any chance that such a direct confrontation could come about. A similar conclusion has been reached by Paul Bracken, which is worth quoting extensively:

"The superpower leaders and their allies in Europe have been more cautious than early theories of nuclear behavior predicted. Unlike strategists of the 1950s and 1960s, with their interesting brinkmanship theories of blackmail, chicken and escalation, national leaders now see the danger in even appearing to begin any such process. No nuclear weapons have been used in anger since 1945; more impressive, there have been no full nuclear alerts on either side. At bottom, I believe, political leaders fear an unpredictable explosion in violence or some sort of complicated loss of control if they play nuclear chicken or even if they order their nuclear forces to full alerts as a means to signal threat or resolve. Such signalling or tacit threats may seem convincing and workable enough on paper. Dysfunctional organizational behavior makes clear, however, how wide the gap between a plan and the real world can be. Political leaders may not be able to foresee the exact path of violent escalation, but they sense that such escalation is enhanced by nuclear sword-rattling.

Since 1962 the rivals have consistently been keeping their relations below the crisis level. Their continuing involvement in arms control; in 'confidence building'; in unilateral and joint measures and practices for avoiding both accidental and unintentional war; in cooperation for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons are all strong arguments for the thesis that both mutual expectations of restraint and restraint itself have become stronger and more stable. That mutual restraint on such a higher level is not affected by a deterioration of political relations and hostile rhetoric has been demonstrated during the Reagan administration. An otherwise highly critical observer of American foreign policy even spoke of the

'extraordinary prudence' of the Reagan administration.¹⁹⁹⁾ Do more recent actions show a lessening of restraint? The bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi in retaliation for Khaddafi's support for terrorism may have been intended also to impress the Soviet Union with the resolve of the United States, but on the other hand the United States did not even verbally attack the client of the Soviet Union, Syria, which could even have been bombed on the same grounds as Lybia.

Mutual restraint and expectations thereof are a function of the nuclear age, of the shared danger of nuclear war. But the nuclear age has other properties too: the continuous development of nuclear weapons and discussion about the nuclear strategies to be followed, if as it is called 'deterrence would fail', and war would break out. Mutual restraint does not eliminate the danger of nuclear war. It only brings the chance down and makes it very small. The chance of a surprise or preemptive attack is next to nil, because that would clearly be suicidal. The chance of an intentional war in Europe is extremely small too, because of the clear demarcation of vital interests and the risk of escalation of any military confrontation. The chance of a nuclear war between the rivals through escalation of a crisis in the Third World is also very small, because of crisis prevention and the development of regulation principles, as discussed above. The chance of accidental war is negligible.²⁰⁰⁾ But it is impossible to say how small the chance of nuclear war precisely is.

The relative autonomy of the nuclear arms race and the rhetoric of nuclear strategies therefore still pose very serious problems. Because of prenuclear thinking the further development of nuclear arsenals is seen by many as the main threat, though perceived in different ways by the strategists (the opponent is getting stronger) and the peace movements (the chance of nuclear war is increasing). The Janushead of nuclear weapons - the persistence of mutual restraint on the one hand and the continuous improvement of nuclear weapons and continuing (the Soviet Union) or increasing (the United States) emphasis on 'counterforce' or warfighting nuclear strategies on the other hand - will be discussed in the next chapter.

5.2 Conclusion II

The Other Side of Mutual Restraint

Crisis prevention through mutual restraint and the development of principles for the demarcation and assertion of vital interests has not only made the world somewhat safer, it has also changed the character of great power rivalry. The active pursuit of hegemony had to be considerably limited if embroilment into games of chicken were to be prevented. The rhetoric of blaming, however, could remain intact. But the perception of threat had to change: the common threat of escalation to nuclear war prevailed in actual conduct, whereas the one-sided perception - and overperception - of threat remained more and more confined to nuclear strategy and evaluation of the military balance.

Nuclear weapons have in that way changed the relation between military and political power. Nuclear weapons can no longer be rattled or even dangled in support of positive political goals, of forcing other states to do something against their will. Nuclear bluff can easily be called. But even more importantly: any nuclear bluff would so blatantly break the rules necessary for crisis prevention that it became unthinkable. After 1962 nuclear weapons have therefore become even more impotent than they already were. Only in very special situations can they be utilised indirectly - through verbal reference - but then only to assert and delimit vital interests. What benefits derived the United States from its nuclear arsenal in its attempt to free the hostages in the American embassy in Iran? What benefits derives the Soviet Union from nuclear weapons in Afghanistan or the United States in Central America? The most expensive and sophisticated weapons, precisely those that make the rivals into the two great powers, have turned out to be least useful for acquiring political gain.²⁰²⁾

The national and collective self-assertion of Third World countries and the need for mutual restraint have made the rivals lose power, particularly during the seventies. They blamed this decline on each other, however. Particularly in the United States there was a strong tendency to blame its humiliating defeats in Vietnam and Iran on the 'parity' or even superiority which the Soviet Union was believed to have acquired. The reaction was to again emphasize the importance of reestablishing American nuclear superiority, which was supposed to translate itself more or less automatically into increased political power.²⁰¹⁾ If the nuclear arsenals are perceived as fulfilling this function, their meaning as a symbolic yardstick for the

power balance between the rivals increases, even if their real significance does not change.

Apart from the quest for superiority and the technological breakthrough that this would require, the political and military impotence of nuclear weapons inspires also attempts to escape from the nuclear age. These can take two forms. The first is the attempt to make the absolute weapons relative again, to develop 'usable' nuclear weapons, and strategies that may make it possible to fight and win a nuclear war through reducing one's vulnerability to such an extent that the damage becomes acceptable again. The second would constitute an even more drastic escape from the nuclear age: the attempt to become fully invulnerable, as was the original aim of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. Invulnerability could increase political manoeuvrability and make the relation between military and political power more direct again.

The development of nuclear strategy and of the nuclear arsenals themselves have been considerably influenced by such attempts to escape from the constraints of mutual vulnerability or by pretending it did not exist. These are the most important, though not the only reasons why the arms race and war fighting nuclear strategies and scenario's have continued despite the shared aim of crisis prevention and the development of mutual restraint. There has been a continuing tendency to return to prenuclear thinking in the hope of escaping from the stalemate of mutual vulnerability. That is the other side being compelled towards mutual restraint.

The attempts to make the absolute weapons relative again or escape altogether from the nuclear age will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. What I have tried to make clear in this chapter is why great power rivalry in the nuclear age has become characterized by the curious and often confusing combination between increased mutual restraint and continuing - though fluctuating - political tensions, nuclear arms competition and worst-case nuclear strategies. The doublebind has been weakened, but not broken.

Notes

1. In our time the left-right opposition within states often leads to depicting the enemy as one's own government or as the great power of the alliance to which one's own country belongs. Anti-Americanism of the latter kind is widespread in the West and so is anti-Sovietism in the East, though that cannot be so easily expressed in public. It is in this respect significant that it has taken the left in the West such a long time to begin to support its counterparts-dissidents in the East. That can be explained by a persistent tendency to think in terms of "the enemy of the enemy of your enemy cannot be your friend".
2. "Communism is the focus of evil in the modern world", Official Text of President Reagan's address to the National Association of Evangelicals, 8 March 1983 reprinted in Co-existence, nr. 21, 1984, pp. 51-58.
3. The debate about 'War Guilt' after the First World War was a consequence of art 231 of the Treaty of Versailles:

"The allied and associated governments affirm, and Germany accepts, the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the allied and associated governments and their national have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies."

Intended as no more than the legal basis for the obligation of Germany to pay war reparations, it was interpreted in Germany as a declaration of guilt for the outbreak of the war. Though huge collections of official documents were thrown into the debate about the question who was to blame for the first World War and books continue to be written about the question, it has been quite inconclusive. The only possible conclusion is that the question cannot be answered at all - and is misleading. See further G. van Benthem van den Bergh, De Staat van Geweld, Amsterdam, 1980, esp. pp. 12-15.
4. Cited in B.W. Schaper, Het Trauma van München, Amsterdam, 1976, p. 187.
5. Eugene W. Rostow, Peace in the Balance, New York, 1972, p. 14.
6. Foreign Affairs XXV, July, 1947, pp. 575-576. Kennan later felt forced to write (in his Memoirs 1925-1950, New York, 1967), that he had been misunderstood in Washington. He had only wanted to make a plea for economic support to Western-European governments - in particular France and Italy - to help remove the threat of a take-over by their communist parties. He had specifically not advocated the creation of NATO. Kennan's later statements make Schurmann's interpretation of his role plausible: "The allegedly electrifying impact of his cable of February 1947, and later his 'Mr. X' article in Foreign Affairs, was hardly due to their analytical brilliance. The rising national security bureaucracy clustered around the White House needed a view of the world that would fit the policies they were beginning to develop." (Franz Schurmann, The Logic of World Power, New York, 1974, p. 92.)

But it is equally plausible to argue that Kennan made explicit and put in coherent form what already had been an implicit world view, from which the policies Schurmann refers to then logically followed.

7. H.W. von der Dunk, 'Het Ontstaan van de Koude Oorlog en de Verschuiving van het Historisch Perspectief', Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden, nr. 85, 1970, pp. 15-48.
8. An exception was D.F. Fleming, The Cold War and its Origins, which was published in 1961. I.F. Stone's The Hidden History of the Korean War, an attempt to refute the conventional interpretation of the responsibility for the outbreak of the war in Korea, which appeared as early as 1952, remained unknown. It was reprinted in 1969. The historian W. Appleman Williams published in 1959 The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, which in its emphasis on the influence of economic expansionism on American foreign policy anticipates many later arguments, though Williams does not explicitly deal with the origins of the Cold War.
9. Norman A. Graebner, The Cold War: Ideological conflict or power struggle?, Lexington, 1963.
10. As publicised in Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology, New York, 1962², pp. 315-355.
11. See Louis Hallé, The Cold War as History, New York, 1966.
12. In this connection see Robert W. Tucker, The Radical Left and American Foreign Policy, Baltimore and London, 1971.
13. Gabriél Kolko, The Politics of War: the World and the United States, 1943-1945, New York, 1968; Joyce and Gabriél Kolko, The Limits of Power: the World and United States Foreign Policy, New York, 1972; David Horowitz, From Yalta to Vietnam, Harmondsworth, 1967.
14. M.C. Brands: 'Koude Oorlog en Revisionisme', Internationale Spectator, May 1973, pp. 299-307.
15. Joyce and Gabriél Kolko, op.cit., p. 19.
16. Ronald Steel, 'The Power and Old Glory', New York Review of Books, May, 31, 1973.
17. Richard J. Barnet, The Roots of War: the Men and Institutions behind U.S. Foreign Policy, New York, 1972; Christopher Lasch, 'Introduction' to Gar Alperovitz, Cold War Essays, New York, 1970, p. 15.
18. For a more extended discussion of the differences between these interpretations, see Tucker, op.cit., esp. Ch. II, Conventional and Radical Critiques of American-Foreign Policy.
19. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., The Bitter Heritage, New York, 1968, idem, 'Eyeless in Indochina', New York Review of Books, 2 December 1971, pp.

- 41-42. For critiques of the 'Quagmire' interpretation see Daniel Ellsberg 'Quagmire Myth and the Stalemate Machine, Public Policy, XIX, No. 2, pp. 217-275, and Ralph Stavins, Richard J. Barnet and Marcus G. Raskin, Washington Plans as Agressive War, New York, 1971.
20. Tucker, op.cit., p. 28.
21. Ellsberg, op.cit., p. 271.
22. Ronald Steel, 'The Good Old Days', The New York Review of Books, 14 June 1973, p. 35.
23. John Lewis Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947, New York and London, 1972, p. 360.
24. Lloyd C. Gardner, Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, Chicago, 1970, p. 317.
25. John Lewis Gaddis, op.cit., p. 359-360.
26. To avoid misunderstanding: the present argument is not concerned with distribution instead of attribution of blame. Neither is it a plea for dissolving all sense of responsibility: the coerciveness of great power rivalry does leave some margin of choice, some room for manoeuver. If both parties would perceive the nature of their rivalry more realistically - instead of just blaming the other - those margins of choice could be widened and make more cooperative conduct possible. See further Chapter V.
27. See Chapter II, par. 4.
28. For the Soviet Union see Seweryn Bialer, Ed., The Domestic Context of Soviet Foreign Policy, Boulder and London, 1981.
29. Cf. the argument discussed above (p.) between Gaddis and Gardner on the question whether a dictatorial government has greater margins of choice and therefore more opportunities for making concessions and compromise than a democratic government. It has also been argued that public opinion is often more belligerent and uncompromising than the government. A counter-argument is that there have as yet been no wars between democratic states. These arguments are not conclusive, however, as Kenneth N. Waltz has argued in Man, the State and War, New York, 1959 and more systematically in Theory of International Politics, Reading etc. 1979, esp. Ch. 4: Reductionist and Systematic Theories, pp. 38-60.
30. William Zimmermann, "What Do Scholars Know About Foreign Policy?", International Journal, Vol. XXXVII, nr. 3, 1981-82, pp. 198-211. For similar arguments see Klaus von Beyme, Die Sowjetunion in der Weltpolitik, München and Zürich, 1983, and David Holloway, The Soviet Union and the Arms Race, New Haven and London, 1983.
31. Ibidem, p. 212.

32. See Thomas W. Milburn, Philip D. Stewart and Richard K. Herrmann, 'Perceiving the Other's Intentions', in Charles W. Kegley and Pat McGowan, Foreign Policy USA/USSR, Beverly Hills, London and New Delhi, 1982, pp. 51/65. For the other side of the coin, a comparison of the self-images of the great powers, see Christer Jönsson, 'The Ideology of Foreign Policy', in ibidem, pp. 91-110. The most thorough comparison of the perceptions of the rivals of both themselves and their adversary is to be found in Daniel Frei, Assumptions and Perceptions in Disarmament, UNIDIR, Geneva, 1984. See also John Lenczowski, Soviet Perceptions of US-Foreign Policy, Ithaca and London, 1982.
33. David B. Rivkin Jr. "What Does Moscow Think?", Foreign Policy, nr. 57, Summer 1985, pp. 85-105.
34. See the interview with former Secretary of Defense McNamara in Robert Scheer, With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush and Nuclear War, New York, 1982, p. 213.
35. The 'window of vulnerability' scenario was predicated on the assumption that Soviet ICBM's had become accurate and numerous enough to eliminate in one strike all land-based American ICBM's in their silos. The American President would then not risk retaliation with the remainder of the strategic Triad (SLBM's and strategic bombers) because that would be suicidal, as the Soviet Union would retain its second strike capability and be able to retaliate in turn. The scenario was based on a double overestimation:
- 1) of the risk that the Soviet Union would be prepared to take for a venture with such an uncertain outcome (how could it be certain that the American President would behave according to the scenario, given the 'collateral damage' in terms of millions of American victims which such a limited first strike would cause?).
 - 2) of the military capability of the Soviet Union. Theoretical accuracy obtained in experimental situations with single missiles fired in a particular direction cannot be extrapolated to a multiple volley in a different direction under different meteorological and gravitational conditions.
- For the scenario itself see Paul Nitze, 'Deterring our Deterrent', Foreign Policy, Nr. 25, Winter 1976-77, pp. 195-215. For the counterarguments Andrew and Alexander Cockburn, 'The Myth of Missile Accuracy', The New York Review of Books, 20 November 1980, and Kosta Tsipis, Arsenal: Understanding Weapons in the Nuclear Age, New York, 1983, esp. Ch. 5: Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. Tsipis' conclusion (p. 146) is: "What these facts really tell us is how poorly we can actually predict the outcome of an attack against the missile silos of a country". For the overperception of strategic inferiority see Hans A. Bethe, 'The Inferiority Complex', The New York Review of Books, June 10, 1982, p. 3. On the Soviet side a 'mirror image' scenario developed of "a surprise attack to destroy almost all Soviet nuclear devices is expected to prevent a return strike against cities in the United States with America retaining the ability of hitting vital enemy centres", (Nikolai Luzin, Nuclear Strategy and Common Sense, Moscow, 1981, cited in Frei, op.cit., p. 63.)
36. Andrew Cockburn speaks of 'threat inflation' in his analysis of Soviet

military power (The Threat: Inside the Soviet Military Machine, New York, 1984). He quotes a Russian military historian and strategic theorist, Colonel V.M. Kulish, who has stated that America's greatest error has been to 'consistently overestimate our capacities' (p. 450). The Soviet Union, however, has itself contributed to that false image by deploying fake missiles and other kinds of deception. See also Franklyn D. Holzman 'Soviet Military Spending: Assessing the Numbers Game', International Security, Vol. 6, nr. 4, Spring 1982, pp. 78-101; Barry R. Posen, 'Measuring the European Conventional Balance: Coping with Complexity in Threat Assessment', International Security, Vol. 9, nr. 3, Winter 1984-85, and John J. Mearsheimer, 'Why the Soviets can't win quickly in Central Europe', International Security, Vol. 7, nr. 1, Summer 1982, pp. 3-39. The Soviet strategy of the offense and corresponding military posture contributes to the spiraling 'conventional' balance in Europe. On this problem of circularity see further Richard Ned Lebow, 'The Soviet Offensive in Europe, The Schlieffen Plan Revisited?', International Security, Vol. 9, nr. 4, Spring 1985.

37. Cf. Richard K. Betts, Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defence Planning, Washington, 1982. For the Soviet Union see Frei, Ibidem, esp. 'Assumptions regarding American Strategies: from ideological provocation to surprise attack', pp. 58-65. Also Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, London and Basingstoke, 1981, Section 4: The Fear of Surprise Attack.
38. How misleading that assumption is in the case of the Soviet Union is extensively demonstrated in Andrew Cockburn, op.cit.
39. That was the image behind Henry Kissinger's policy towards the Soviet Union. See Stanley Hoffmann, Dead Ends, Cambridge, 1983, Ch. 2 and 3: The World According to Henry Kissinger I and II, pp. 17-67.
40. Cf. Jozef Goldblat, 'US and Soviet allegations of breeches of arms control agreements', The Arms Race and Arms Control 1984, SIPRI, London and Philadelphia, 1984, pp. 179-188.
41. For an analysis of the way in which these fantasy images led to defense panics and influenced the arms race see Herman de Lange, De Bewapeningswedloop tussen de Verenigde Staten en de Sovjet Unie, 1948-1980, Groningen, 1982. See also Robert H. Johnson, 'Periods of Peril: the Window of Vulnerability and Other Myths', Foreign Affairs, Vol. 61, nr. 4, Spring 1983, pp. 950-971.
42. David B. Rivkin, op.cit., p. 93.
43. Frei, Ibidem, p. 264. Frei has culled 28 'patterns of cognition' from his research, which support and supplement the tendencies discussed above, such as "'anchoring' all new information into existing perceptions; incuriosity; selective perception and recall of historical analogies; neglecting factors of change in favour of constant factors; worst-case analysis combined with 'bad faith' assumptions, making falsification impossible; perceptions of the opponents greater coherence in leadership and master-plans; 'black and white' mirror

images; double think and standards: 'the same deed is bad if done by the adversary, but perfectly acceptable if done by oneself'; perception of the irrelevance of the opponent's argument; reluctance to examine alternatives; perceived impossibility of reciprocity; need for tough self-image and demonstrations of firmness and resolution etc.

44. See Patrick M. Morgan, Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis; Beverly Hills and London, 1977, and Robert Powell, 'The Theoretical Foundations of Strategic Nuclear Deterrence', Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 100, nr. 1, Spring 1985, p. 75-96 and Robert Jervis, 'Deterrence Theory Revisited', World Politics, Vol. 31, 1979, pp. 289-324..
45. Ibidem, p. 17.
46. Borrowed from Michael Mandelbaum, The Nuclear Revolution: International Politics before and after Hiroshima, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 4-5.
47. Though the real need for the atomic bomb to make Japan surrender has been disputed, that this was the motive rather than to impress the Soviet-Union, as Gar Alperovitz has argued (Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam, New York, 1965) has been well enough established. Cf. Herbert Feis, The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II, Princeton, 1966 and Martin J. Sherwin, A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Great Alliance, New York, 1975. That did not preclude, however, that the bomb was at first seen by American decision-makers as 'a potential instrument of military and diplomatic policy' (Sherwin, p. 220).
48. " ... It may be in this respect that the decision to end World War II with atomic weapons has had its most beneficial, if wholly unforeseen effect: without the awesome demonstrations Hiroshima and Nagasaki provided of the consequences of its failure, it is difficult to imagine how the 'balance of terror' could have been maintained with the success that it has had during the past quarter-century", John Lewis Gaddis, Russia, The Soviet Union and the United States: an Interpretive History, New York etc., 1978, p. 174.
49. Quoted in Mandelbaum, op.cit., p. 204. Though Truman never shied away from saying that he would use nuclear weapons in response to an attack by the Soviet Union he did give evidence of prudence and restraint in a conversation with David Lilienthal: "I don't think we ought to use this thing unless we absolutely have to. It is a terrible thing to order the use of something that is so terribly destructive beyond anything we have ever had. You have got to understand that this isn't a military weapon. It is used to wipe out women, children and unarmed people, and not for military use. So we have to treat this differently from rifles and cannon and ordinary things like that". Cited in Richard Ned Lebow, 'Windows of opportunity: Do States Jump through Them?', International Security, Summer 1984, Nr. 1, p. 173.
50. Cf. Office of Technology Assessment of the Congress of the United

States, The Effects of Nuclear War, Montclair and London, 1980. Arthur M. Westing, 'Nuclear Winter: a bibliography', in SIPRI Yearbook 1985, London and Philadelphia, 1985, pp. 126-129. In the Soviet Union the 'nuclear winter' effect has also received much attention. A review of Soviet research is given in A.S. Ginsberg, G.S. Golitsyn and A.A. Vasiliev, 'Global Consequence of a Nuclear War: a review of recent Soviet Studies', idem, pp. 106-126.

51. Cf. Lawrence Freedman, op.cit., Section 1, First and Second Thoughts and Section 2, Ch. 4, Strategy for an Atomic Monopoly, pp. 1-63.
52. Ibidem, p. 25.
53. Ibidem, p. 26.
54. Ibidem, p. 27.
55. Cited in Gregg Herken, The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War 1945-1956, New York, 1980, p. 112.
56. Ibidem, p. 113.
57. Lebow, op.cit., pp. 168-169, mentions but two: Dr. Virgil Jordan, president of the National Industrial Conference Board and a former military correspondent for the New York Herald Tribune Major George Fielding Eliot.
58. Cited in Ibidem, p. 171.
59. Freedman, op.cit., p. 27.
60. Lebow, op.cit., p. 169.
61. NSC (National Security Council) 68, United States Objectives and Programs for National Security, April 19, 1950 reprinted in Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis, Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, New York, 1978, pp. 385-442. See pp. 431-432. On the development of the National Security Council see Senator Henry M. Jackson (Ed.), The National Security Council, New York, 1965.
62. Lebow, op.cit., pp. 169-170.
63. Ibidem, p. 147.
64. Cited in ibidem, p. 171.
65. The telegram and the article have both been reprinted in Etzold and Gaddis, op.cit., pp. 50-64 and 84-90. See further John L. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy, New York and Oxford, 1982, esp. Ch. 2, 'George Kennan and the Strategy of Containment', pp. 25-53. Kennan wrote explicitly: "(A democracy) cannot use (military forces) as an offensive threat. It cannot manipulate them tactically ... for the accomplishment of measures of war. They therefore constitute ... a

fixed rather than a mobile, factor in the conduct of foreign policy" (p. 39).

66. Etzold and Gaddis, op.cit., p. 437.
67. See Gaddis, op.cit., pp. 190-193 and Herken, op.cit., pp. 257-262.
68. Herken, op.cit., p. 259.
69. Ibidem, p. 260.
70. Ibidem, p. 259.
71. Truman to Clark Clifford, cited in Herken, ibidem, p. 263. See also Michael Mandelbaum, 'The Nuclear Presidency', Ch. 7 of The Nuclear Revolution, op.cit., pp. 177-207.
72. See Gaddis, Russia, the Soviet Union and the United States, p. 179.
73. Vojtech Mastny, Russia's Road to the Cold War: Diplomacy, Warfare and the Politics of Confrontation, 1941-1945, New York, 1978.
74. Holloway, op.cit., p. 27.
75. Lebow, op.cit., p. 175, as the other quotations in this paragraph.
76. Cf. Mastny, op.cit., pp. 305-306.
77. Greg Herken has without much justification given that title to his book on American diplomacy during the American nuclear monopoly. It has been derived from a statement by Bernard Baruch: "Before a country is ready to relinquish any winning weapons, it must have more than words to assure it" (Herken, Ibidem, p. VII).
78. The phrase comes from William T.R. Fox and was taken over by Bernard Brodie in the first book published on the role of atomic weapons in international politics and military strategy, which he edited: The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order, New York, 1946.
79. The term 'nuclear' has replaced 'atomic' after the thermonuclear fusion weapon - the H bomb - had been developed.
80. The following account is based on Freedman, op.cit., especially 'Early Thoughts on Deterrence', pp. 40-45; H.B.M. de Lange, 'William Borden: Een vroege defensieconservatieve strategische denker', Transaktie, Vol. 14, nr. 3, 1985, pp. 225-241, and Fred Kaplan, The Wizards of Armageddon, New York, 1983, Ch. 1 and 2, pp. 9-33.
81. Cited in Fred Kaplan, ibidem, p. 27. Viner and Brodie were not the only prescient thinkers about the political implications of the bomb. George Orwell wrote in his As I Please column in the newspaper the Tribune that out of fear of the terrible consequences the "surviving great nations make a tacit agreement never to use the atomic bomb against each other" (Cited in Koen Koch, 'Orwell on International

Politics: the Combination of Two English Tradition', in Rob Kroes, Ed., Nineteen Eighty Four and the Apocalyptic Imagination in America, Amsterdam, 1985, p. 58. Orwell, however, supposed that this kind of restraint would require a nuclear war first (the surviving great nations). In 1984 he has dated that war between 1955 and 1957. See further G. van Benthem van den Bergh, 'Orwell en de internationale Politiek', De Gids, Vol. 1, nr. 1/2, 1984, pp. 92-95.

82. Ibidem, p. 27.
83. Ibidem, p. 29.
84. Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, How Much is Enough? Shaping the Defence Programme 1961-1969, New York, 1971.
85. Freedman, op.cit., p. 44.
86. Kaplan, op.cit., p. 32. In 1983 a special Harvard Study Group still had to give this title to a book written to more adequately inform the American public about the role of nuclear weapons in international politics. The Harvard Nuclear Study Group, Living with Nuclear Weapons, Toronto etc., 1983.
87. Cited in Kaplan, Ibidem, p. 31.
88. Ibidem, p. 32.
89. Kaplan, ibidem, p. 32.
90. During the last years of his life Brodie returned to this theme in a book with exactly that title: War and Politics (New York and London, 1975). His most pregnant formulation of the function of nuclear weapons 'utility in non-use' is the title of Chapter 9 of that study.
91. "When Clausewitz used the phrase 'the expression of the spirit of the state' to define policy ... he suggested the use of an expression to what writers of today would call 'the national interest'", Raymond Aron, Clausewitz, Philosopher of War, London, etc. 1983, p. 374-375. See esp. Ch. 4, The Means and the Ends, pp. 95-117 and Ch. 15, Policy or the Expression of the Spirit of the State, pp. 372-399.
92. De Lange, op.cit., p. 234.
93. Ibidem, p. 231.
94. Borden foresaw the development of satellite-missiles, spaceships, artificial planets, anti-satellite missiles (ABM) and automatic retaliation, similar to Herman Kahn's doomsday machine or to 'launch on warning' as a somewhat less drastic system. That Borden anticipated 'launch on warning' implies that he did not believe in the possibility of invulnerable nuclear arsenals. He considered 'robot-controlled rockets' necessary, for countermeasures against a nuclear Pearl Harbour "before the aggressors missiles exploded over North America and hampered our ability to retaliate", cited in De Lange, ibidem, p.

233.

95. Cited in ibidem, p. 235.
96. Ibidem, p. 236.
97. Ibidem, p. 236.
98. Theo Sommer, 'Verstrahlt und Verbrannt', die Zeit, August 2, 1985, cited in De Lange, ibidem, p. 226.
99. Kaplan, ibidem, p. 350.
100. The pressures of accepted premises and ways of reasoning are very strong in the 'strategic community'. After Brodie had joined the Rand Corporation even he succumbed to the temptations of the attempt to integrate nuclear weapons into a rational military strategy, designed to make it possible to come out on top when 'deterrence would fail'. (See Fred Kaplan, op.cit., pp. 204-207.) In the context of the emerging critique of 'massive retaliation', Brodie coined the term 'intra-war deterrence' which assumed the possibility of limited war, of controlling the use of nuclear weapons in an actual war (ibidem, p. 223). In the seventies Brodie repudiated his own work during that period and returned to his earlier ideas of the Absolute Weapon. When Colin Gray once again brought up the idea of gearing one's strategy to 'winning' a nuclear war, Michael Howard devoted the first Bernard Brodie lecture at the University of California at Los Angeles to a strong critique of that position, using Brodie's own work. ('On Fighting a Nuclear War', International Security, Vol. 5, nr. 2, 1981, pp. 3-17.)
101. As De Lange characterizes their positions with some justice, ibidem, (p. 226). However, the 'political' orientation is informed by a view of nuclear weapons making for restraint, whereas the 'weapon' orientation is informed by a view of international politics which does not allow for limited cooperation or compromise. In fact, both orientations have a perspective on both 'politics' and 'weapons'.
102. The story is told by Kaplan, op.cit., p. 385-386.
103. Ibidem, p. 386.
104. "Some people consider it remarkable that no nuclear weapons have been fired since 1945. Far more remarkable is the absence of a full Soviet-American alert. No American bombers have been launched in anticipation of enemy attack, at no time have nuclear weapons in Europe been dispersed from their peacetime storage sites, nor have all of the Soviet nuclear submarines been dispatched from their ports at one time. Instead of the Munich world of blackmail backed by nuclear alerts, that was predicted (in the 1950's), we have had more than fifty years in which nuclear forces have been handled with kid gloves, because national leaders understood the dangers", Paul Bracken, The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces, New Haven and London, 1983, p. 2. Bracken's concern is therefore: "Instead of asking whether war can be

controlled, it is more relevant to ask whether nuclear alerts can be controlled" (p. 242).

105. Cited in Freedman, op.cit., p. 38. When Clark Clifford became President Johnson's Secretary of Defense he somewhat ironically, clinched the argument for the beginning of the American retreat from Vietnam. See Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: a History, Harmondsworth, 1984, pp. 551-556.
106. On crisis strategy see Thomas C. Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict, New York, 1963 and Arms and Influence, New Haven and London, 1966. Schelling sees a crisis as an 'exercise in competitive risk-taking' (Arms and Influence, pp. 92-103). For an empirical analysis of crises in international policies, see Richard Ned Lebow, Between Peace and War: the Nature of International Crisis, Baltimore and London, 1981. From the 26 cases Lebow analyses only three are crises in direct Soviet-American relations: Berlin 1948-1949, Korea 1950 and Cuba 1962. Lebow usefully defines an international crisis by three components (p. 10-12).
1. Policy makers perceive that the action or threatened action of another international actor seriously impairs concrete national interests, the country's bargaining reputation, or their own ability to remain in power.
 2. Policy-makers perceive that any actions on their part designed to counter this threat (capitulation aside) will raise a significant prospect of war.
 3. Policy-makers perceive themselves to be acting under time constraints.
- On the Cuban missile crisis also 'The Cuban Missile Crisis: Reading the Lessons Correctly', Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 98, Nr. 3, Fall 1983, pp. 431-454.
107. Thomas C. Schelling, op.cit. 95.
108. Both quotations from Lebow, op.cit.
109. Louis J. Hallé, The Cold War as History, New York, 1962, provides a good example of the way 1962 was interpreted as a turning-point in US-Soviet relations. See also Gaddis, Russia, The Soviet Union and the United States, who goes less far, but does see 1962 as demarcating a transition 'from Confrontation to Negotiation' (Ch. IX). André Fontaine concludes his Histoire de la Guerre Froide (Paris, 1967) with the aftermath of the Cuban crisis.
110. "The Soviet Union tested the West's ambiguous commitment in gradual stages; new restrictions on the political and economic life of the city were only introduced after it became apparent that previous harassments had not met with serious resistance", Lebow, ibidem, p. 85.
111. See Bernard Brodie, War and Politics. p. 395.
112. Robert T. Oliver, former American advisor to South-Korean President Syngman Rhee in an article 'Why War Came in Korea', quoted by J.F.

Stone, op.cit., p. 13. Cf. also C.J. Bartlett, The Global Conflict 1880-1970: the international rivalry of the great powers, London and New York, 1984, pp. 297-302.

113. The mutual assertion of vital interests and the military stalemate were more important than President Eisenhower's indirect warning to China - in the form of Secretary Dulles telling Prime Minister Nehru that the US might feel compelled "to use atomic weapons if a truce could not be arranged". Cited in Robert A. Divine, Eisenhower and the Cold War, New York and Oxford, 1981, p. 30. See also Bartlett, op.cit., p. 302.
114. Gaddis and Etzold, op.cit., p. 398.
115. Bartlett, op.cit., p. 312.
116. That is the argument of Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe", The New York Review of Books, Vol. XXXI, nr. 7, 26 April 1984. It also clarifies the 'cultural' emphasis of the activities of Charta 77.
117. André Fontaine, Histoire de la Guerre Froide, Vol. II, Paris, 1982², p. 11.
118. Cited in Bartlett, op.cit., p. 309.
119. On the consequences of Sputnik for the United States see Walter A. McDougall, "...The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age", New York, 1985.
120. Bartlett, op.cit., p. 258.
121. There is a growing asymmetry between the amount of information available - and still becoming available - on the American side and the nearly complete lack of it on the Soviet side. See for example the recent publication of verbatim transcripts of 'White House Tapes and Minutes of the Cuban Missile Crisis, ExCom meetings, October 1962', International Security, Vol. 10, nr. 1, Summer 1985, pp. 171-203. Even though the documents have been 'sanitized', they contain very important material to clarify the arguments used in the discussion about the options believed to be available to the United States after the discovery of the missiles. Interpretations of American conduct can thus be tested. But with respect to the motives and arguments of the Soviet-Union more than a 'conjectural reconstruction' that can most plausibly 'account for the vast risk involved in the Soviet actions' is not possible. Cf. Adam B. Ulam, The Rivals. America and Russia since World War II, New York, 1971, p. 332.
122. Ulam, op.cit., p. 325-331; Herbert S. Dinerstein, The Making of a Missile Crisis: October 1962, Baltimore and London, 1976, pp. 186-187 and Graham T. Allison, The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis, Boston, 1971, pp. 40-56.
123. Dinerstein, op.cit., p. 234.

124. Ulam, op.cit., p. 331.
125. Gaddis, Russia, The Soviet-Union and the United States, p. 235.
126. Scheer, op.cit., p. 217.
127. Allison, op.cit., p. 54; Gaddis, op.cit., p. 237; Bartlett, op.cit., p. 343.
128. Ulam, op.cit., p. 332.
129. Cf. note 122.
130. Adam Ulam, Dangerous Relations: the Soviet-Union in World Politics 1970-1982, Oxford, 1983, p. 131.
131. Ibidem.
132. White House Tapes, op.cit., pp. 167-168.
133. See the detailed list of Soviet military equipment in Cuba in Allison, op.cit., pp. 104-106 and Scott D. Sagan, 'Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management', International Security, Vol. 9, No. 4, Spring 1985, pp. 99-139, p. 111.
134. Allison, op.cit., p. 233.
135. Idem, p. 194.
136. Ibidem, p. 221.
137. Cited in Marc Trachtenberg, 'The Influence of Nuclear Weapons in the Cuban Missile Crisis', International Security, Vol. 10, no. 1, Summer 1985, p. 137.
138. Cited in Allison, op.cit., pp. 222-223.
139. Idem, p. 211.
140. Ibidem, pp. 219-220.
141. Ibidem, p. 1.
142. Lebow, op.cit., pp. 64-65 has classified the Cuban missile crisis as a brinkmanship crisis, triggered by "the sudden realization that the United States was capable of launching an effective first strike against the Soviet Union". But, as we have seen, it is very unlikely that this was the motive. So it was not a brinkmanship crisis, though it did bring the rivals closer to the brink of war than any other confrontation.
143. Allison, op.cit., p. 221.
144. Sagan, op.cit., p. 110.

145. Marc Trachtenberg in his Introduction to the White House Tapes, op.cit., p. 169.
146. Idem, p. 165.
147. Sagan, op.cit., p. 106.
148. Cited in Allison, op.cit., p. 1.
149. Cited in Brodie, op.cit., p. 424.
150. Ibidem.
151. Op.cit., p. 1.
152. White House Tapes, op.cit., p. 187.
153. George Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Roswell Gilpatric, Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk and Theodore Sorensen, "The Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis", Time, September 1982.
154. In a speech to the National Security Council, January 1963, cited in Trachtenberg, 'The Influence of Nuclear Weapons', op.cit., p. 153.
155. Sagan, op.cit., p. 118 passim.
156. Cited in idem, p. 119.
157. Ibidem.
158. The following account is based on Sagan, op.cit.
159. Idem, p. 99.
160. Idem, pp. 113-114.
161. Idem, p. 99.
162. Cited in Trachtenberg, op.cit., p. 137.
163. See Ball c.s., op.cit..
164. Cited in Trachtenberg, op.cit., pp. 138-139.
165. See par.
166. Thomas Schelling, Arms and Influence, pp. 94-96.
167. Trachtenberg, op.cit., p. 154.
168. Idem, pp. 156-163.
169. Edgar Allen Poe's story 'The Descent into the Maelstrom' has been used by Norbert Elias to elucidate the concept of a doublebind situation or

- process. See his Involvement and Detachment, Oxford, 1986, pp. .
170. Phil Williams, Crisis Management: Confrontation and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age, London, 1976, pp. 73-83.
 171. H.W. Houweling and J.G. Siccama (in Studies in Peace, War, Strategy, mimeo, 1986, Ch. 16. 'Everything I have written is obsolete' and 'the Survival of Clausewitz in the Nuclear Age') point out that bluffing during a crisis has become more dangerous because of the turn towards counterforce nuclear strategies and capabilities. However, the irrelevance of 'limited war' conceptions during the Cuban missile crisis (see pp.) has shown the limited significance of rhetorical nuclear strategy for the conduct of the rivals in a crisis.
 172. Bartlett, op.cit., p. 343.
 173. Cited in Lebow, op.cit., p. 331.
 174. Cited in Freedman, op.cit., p. 244.
 175. Bartlett, idem, p. 346.
 176. Williams, op.cit., p. 53.
 177. Stanley Hoffmann, The State of War, New York and London, 1965, p. 142.
 178. Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements. Texts and History of Negotiations, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Washington, 1980, p. 159.
 179. For the text, see idem, pp. 41-44.
 180. Text in ibidem, pp. 31-32. The original combination of a radio system with a back-up wire-telegraph system has been replaced in 1971 by a satellite communications system, still with the wire-telegraph as back-up. See 'Agreement on Measures to Improve' the Hot Line in ibidem, pp. 115-116.
 181. Text in ibidem, pp. 90-94.
 182. Ibidem, p. 132.
 183. Michael Mandelbaum, op.cit., Ch. 7. The Nuclear Presidency, pp. 177-206. His conclusion: "The penalties in the nuclear age...exceed the darkest imagining of the past. The responsibility for avoiding them has weighed on the American President. The nuclear age has brought with it a personal nightmare for each man who has held the office since 1945. The drive for arms control has been, for each of them, a way of trying to awaken from it".
 184. See Williams, op.cit., p. 58.
 185. Freedman, op.cit., p. 399.

186. See his 'The Development of Nuclear Strategy', International Security, Vol. 2, No. 3, Winter 1977-78, pp. 65-81.
187. For a refutation of the argument that domestic politics and Kennedy's own reputation were more important see Williams, op.cit., pp. 85-88.
188. For the American side see Robert H. Johnson, 'Exaggerating America's stakes in the Third World', International Security, Vol. 10, No. 3, Winter 1985-86, pp. 32-68. An example: the National Security Council in the 1950's "routinely referred to the Middle East as a land bridge between Europe and Africa, the control of which could determine the faith of either or both" and stated about the Philippines that "Soviet domination of these islands would seriously jeopardize the entire structure of anti-Communist defenses in Southeast Asia and the off-shore island chain, including Japan" (p. 33). Of special importance were traits, capes and island chains - showing how prenuclear thinking still determined what constitute strategically important positions.
189. See Sagan, op.cit., pp. 122-126 and Barry M. Blechman and Douglas M. Hart, 'The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons: The 1973 Middle East Crisis', International Security, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer 1982, pp. 132-156.
190. It is remarkable how small a role the background presence of the Soviet-Union has played in the development of American intervention in Vietnam. See the extensive analysis in George M.T. Kahin, Intervention: How America became involved in Vietnam, New York, 1986.
191. Sagan, op.cit., p. 122.
192. Henry Kissinger as cited in ibidem.
193. Blechman and Hart, op.cit., p. 147.
194. Idem, pp. 146-147.
195. Williams, op.cit., p. 205.
196. Only in urging restraint, as a warning against escalating the war to the extent that China might be drawn in and the use of nuclear weapons would be the only way to avoid defeat. See Mc T. Kahin, op.cit., p. 212, 287, 393. Also Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: History, New York, 1983.
197. See Norman Podhorotz, The Present Danger, New York, 1980. Its subtitle is 'Do we have the will to reverse the decline of American power?'
198. Paul Bracken, 'Accidental Nuclear War', Chapter 2 of Graham Allison, Albert Carnesale and Joseph S. Nye Jr., Hawks, Doves and Owls: An Agenda for Avoiding Nuclear War, New York and London, 1985, pp. 28-29.
199. Stanley Hoffman in a lecture for the Netherlands Association of International Affairs, April 26, 1984.
200. See Bracken, op.cit. and Daniel Fre, Risks of Unintentional Nuclear

War, Geneva, 1982, esp. Ch. VI. Nuclear Accidents and Incidents, pp. 155-164. Frei's conclusion: "Contrary to the public's perception, the risk of nuclear war by accident is minute and negligible, provided that strategic stability is assured" (p. 165).

201. For the argument see Padhorotz, op.cit., which has been advertised as President Reagan's bed-side reading.
202. Cf. McGeorge Bundy, 'The Unimpressive Record of Atomic Diplomacy' in Gwyn Prins (ed.), The Choice: Nuclear Weapons versus Security, London, 1984, pp. 42-55.