

There are three types of war  
 in the author's view. We've

By Maj Francis R. Hittinger, Jr.

# Strategy in the

had trouble, he says, because  
 we've failed to differentiate  
 properly among the three.



✦ BEFORE EXAMINING THE STRATEGY OF WAR ONE MUST appreciate the many different meanings of the word "war" itself. To the last two generations of Americans war has had only one meaning—a righteous cause, full mobilization of the national economic and military potential, application of maximum force, and annihilation of the enemy, ending in his unconditional surrender. This concept of total war identifies only one of the varieties of war listed in the spectrum of war as shown in the accompanying table—general war. There is need for a clearer understanding and appreciation of the various kinds or degrees of war. We must understand this spectrum to appreciate the strategical position of the US during the 1960s. The strategies fitted to the various kinds of war vary markedly. We will consider general war, then limited war, and finally quasi-war to see how they differ and to define the strategy suggested by each. General war is familiar to us. World Wars I and II were examples of such wars. Limited war, however, is not clearly understood. This is a war fought for limited national objectives. The area, scope, weapons, and forces are also limited. Unconditional surrender of the enemy is not the objective. An example was the Korean War. The national objective here was to restore the boundary of South Korea along the 38th parallel. In achieving this goal, United Nations forces refrained from the use of nuclear weapons and the strength of ground forces was limited despite the probability that a few more UN divisions would have been able to achieve decisive results. The area of conflict was confined to the Korean peninsula. UN air and sea power was not exerted on targets north of the Yalu River nor on the Chinese mainland. The Communists, in turn,

refrained from directing air attacks in force against UN port facilities at Inchon, Pusan, and in Japan. They also avoided enlarging the scope of the war, withholding air and subsurface elements from attacking UN forces. These courses of action were well within their capability. It is evident that both sides purposely fought a limited war to obtain limited strategic and political objectives. Quasi-war is a term less clearly understood than limited war and some would err by not regarding it as war. In quasi-war military force and diplomatic action are applied in such close coordination that the two are practically inseparable. There is no declaration of war. Involved is the intervention of a stronger power in the internal affairs of another state to stabilize and strengthen a threatened government. The occupation of Haiti from 1918 to 1933 and the recent intervention in Lebanon serve as excellent examples of quasi-war. Now that the three types of war in the spectrum have been identified, let's examine some strategic aspects of each.

**Strategy of General War**

The concept of general war was aptly expressed by the great Prussian military theorist Clausewitz. He described war as "... an act of violence pushed to the utmost bounds," and further as "... an affair of the whole nation." Americans have fought two such wars in this country. Total economic, industrial, political, and social efforts produced a military force that won complete victories. Decisive results were achieved by the total destruction of the enemy's armed forces and his will to resist. This strategy of general war was ideally suited for



# Spectrum of War

## LIMITED WAR

## GENERAL WAR

**Military Action: Limited**

**Military Action: Maximum**

**Diplomatic Action: Limited**

**Diplomatic Action: Minimum**

the US during World Wars I and II. Economically, it allowed our superior technology and industrial potential to be used to best advantage and it was also well-suited to our national psychological temperament. The freedom of our economic system fostered competition and developed a contagious enthusiasm among men striving for a common goal. These characteristics are essential for the maximum effort required for general war. We fought with righteous indignation to right a wrong, much as the Crusaders did.

The successful strategy of general war has dominated our thinking for decades. We have failed to appreciate the strategy of limited and quasi-wars because we are naturally inclined to make the all-out effort—to set things in order as quickly as possible. This has led to our recent primary strategy of deterring war through massive nuclear retaliation. Such strategy is essential for general war but is incapable of meeting the requirements for graduated force necessary in waging the other types of war in the spectrum. Yet, to better support this single strategy and to placate the demands for economy, our conventional air, ground, and naval forces had been reduced in strength and allowed to become obsolescent.

Our national strategy has been much too narrow. The general war for which we were best prepared is the least likely to occur. This became apparent when both sides had produced enough nuclear weapons to destroy one another. According to Dr. Henry Kissinger in *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, 50 thermonuclear weapons delivered at optimum points in either the US or the USSR would inflict about 30 percent casualties on the total populations of either country. Both sides have long-range or strategic bombers for de-

livery and are rapidly developing diversified missile capabilities. The strategy of both sides is to avoid general war since a thermonuclear exchange would deprive both sides of the resources and the will to capitalize on any intended gains. Furthermore, a third power or a combination of unengaged nations would be likely to emerge as stronger world powers than the thermonuclear antagonists. Both the US and the USSR must retain the strategy of maintaining a ready thermonuclear capability.

The Communists' unalterable goal is world domination, as they have told the world in their writings and speeches for the last 40 years. Many Americans refuse to believe this despite the fact that the Communists have gained control of one-third of the world's people and one-fourth of the world's territory. Assuming that general war is unlikely, how do the Communists intend to spread their doctrine throughout the rest of the world?

### **The Soviet Strategy of Ambiguity**

The Soviets realize that general war would almost certainly result from an unambiguous threat to western Europe or an attack upon any nation with which the US is allied. Soviet strategy will nevertheless support the goal of world domination by the ambiguous threat, which is most effective against the newly-formed or uncommitted nations of the world. This strategy is designed to deceive us by disguising the source of the movement or revolution by covert methods. The ambiguity of the threat is further increased by the passage of time. Patience and perseverance are characteristics of the Communists. Time is strategically their ally rather than ours. They will weave into the fabric of the threat



Peace talks at Panmunjon:

... failure "to coordinate power and diplomacy."

alternate phases of peace offensives and missile rattling bluffs. By this strategy they hope to intimidate, disarm, and divide the countries of the free world and to weaken our alliances.

What means can we take to defeat or at least negate or contain the ambiguous threat whenever it is identified? The answer lies in the remaining portion of the spectrum of war—execution of either limited or quasi-war operations. We must employ conventional forces promptly in the proper strength to counter the threat. To lend credibility to our strategy we must continually modernize and increase the mobility of our conventional forces. We must continue to strengthen and solidify our alliances. The USSR must be made to realize that an attack on, or a threat to, one of our allies will unequivocally commit the US to military action. The Soviets will continue a strategy of periodically testing our strength, particularly our moral will and determination to use it. We must have the courage to stand firm and to act with resolution.

To be sure, the risk of general war exists in the limited war situation and the chance of limited war is always present in the quasi-war deployment. But these risks must be undertaken whenever the threat is identified. To enhance the chance of success for this strategy we must maintain strong conventional forces deployed either afloat or at advanced overseas bases near threatened areas. Our present weakness lies in the limited number of ground divisions, lack of organic tactical aviation to support US Army divisions, and the inadequacy of our amphibious shipping and air lift. The enemy is capable of creating limited war situations in two or more widely dispersed localities. This would embarrass our strategy of limited war due to our present shortage of conventional forces. The USSR probably

has not tried this because she is unwilling to accept the increased risk of general war at this time. (Ed: Maj Hittinger's article was written before recent increase in conventional war forces.)

#### Limited Nuclear War

Can a limited war be fought with nuclear weapons and remain limited? It is always possible that one or both sides would resort to the use of tactical nuclear weapons. If so, it is improbable that the war would remain limited. More likely, the size and number of weapons employed would be increased constantly by opposing commanders until a general war with a thermonuclear exchange would result. Chances are, however, nuclear weapons would not be employed in a limited war, simply because neither side wants general war.

The US has said it will not become a nuclear aggressor, a policy based not only on moral values but also on the practical reality that neither side can gain by such aggression. This gives our opponent the advantage of striking the first nuclear blow. But is this as serious a disadvantage as supposed? Not if we are ready to retaliate in kind. Our strategy must be to retain a retaliatory capability in any type of war. In general war our bombers and missiles are dispersed and diversified so that they are practically impossible to neutralize simultaneously. Similarly, in limited conventional war, our forces must be deployed to present the least profitable nuclear target and, of greater importance, they must be capable of prompt delivery of nuclear counterblows whenever required. Limited conventional wars can be fought extensively without nuclear weapons for essentially the same reason that general war with thermonuclear weapons has not been fought to date:



Restoring order in Lebanon:

... diplomatic and military action in concert.

Two general wars in which diplomacy was largely suspended, the Major writes, have led us to misunderstand that military, diplomatic action are related.

it offers no advantage to either side.

How much of an advantage are tactical nuclear weapons? Granted they can provide overwhelming fire support in an area, with surprise and speed. But conventional arms can provide more than adequate fire support for all but the most unusual situations in a reasonable amount of time.

Let's examine some of the disadvantages of tactical nuclear fire support. First, there is the possibility of error in the delivery means. This is of relatively minor importance when employing conventional fires but could be disastrous with nuclear weapons. Then there is the possibility of a malfunction in the weapon itself, which might give a yield other than the one expected or a burst at the wrong height. A ground burst instead of an air burst would have serious consequences. Also, limited war will most likely be fought in the homeland of one of our allied nations. This further inhibits the use of nuclear weapons. We must avoid mass destruction of population centers and vital installations. Conventional fires are safer, more discriminating, and present a minimum problem from adverse sociological and political effects. It is unlikely that a commander having organic and other normal fire support units would gain a marked advantage by using nuclear weapons except in avoiding certain defeat by overwhelming forces. Such a situation could occur in western Europe as a result of an unambiguous Soviet offensive. General war with a thermonuclear exchange would almost certainly ensue.



**Maj Hittinger**, who writes: "I have always desired to make a contribution to the *Gazette*," hit paydirt on his initial attempt, as witnessed by the Merit Award for his provocative article. A V-12/NROTC product of Villanova ('48), he spent the next three years after Basic School as a platoon leader in 2nd and

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#### Quasi-War and the Strategy of Diplomacy

Quasi-war occupies the lower end of the spectrum, in which only minimum military force is exerted in a given situation. The strategy of quasi-war embraces the close

and continuous integration of diplomatic and military actions. The precise amount of force must be tailored to fit each situation. To ensure concerted diplomatic and military actions, the chief of the diplomatic mission furnishes political and sociological advice to the unified commander, the amphibious task force commander, and the Marine expeditionary force commander. In operations ashore liaison and coordination must exist between the military forces, the diplomatic mission, and officials of the government of the country concerned.

Quasi-war is largely political. For every military move there is generally a related diplomatic move until national objectives have been attained. The military commander must restrain his unit from using excessive force. This would alienate the population or precipitate a limited war. The strategy of quasi-war involves a show of force with the implied threat of use. This is designed to discourage dissident forces from continuing operations contrary to the interests of the US or her allies. Speed of reaction is as vital in quasi-war as it is in the other types of war. Prompt intervention can disrupt dissident forces before they are fully organized.

The amphibious task force, with its integral Fleet Marine Force elements, is an instrument of force with a unique ability to show its strength without unleashing it. Thus it plays an essential role throughout the spectrum of war.

#### Power and Diplomacy

There is a national need for a clearer understanding of the relationship of power to diplomacy. The present lack of appreciation can be attributed to the events of the past 50 years. Two general wars have been fought in which diplomatic relations were severed with the declaration of war and were not resumed until the unconditional surrender of the enemy was accepted. This led two generations of statesmen and military men to presume that diplomatic action was separate and distinct from military action. Diplomacy has been related only to peace and power only to war. When the nation was enjoying peace, diplomacy was applied. Whenever that failed we resorted to war. Diplomacy was then curtailed and power was exerted.

This pattern is valid in general war but leads to a fundamental error in limited and quasi-war situations.

Military power and diplomacy must be used in concert. The failure of the US to understand this relationship prevented us from making gains during the period of our nuclear monopoly after World War II. In fact, the Soviets made gains during that period with their "ban the bomb" propaganda. This created fear and revolution for nuclear weapons throughout the world and reduced the effect of our diplomacy. Again at Panmunjon the Soviets took advantage of our failure to coordinate power and diplomacy. During the lengthy peace negotiations the Soviets built up their military power to enhance their diplomatic position. The US decreased its military power as soon as the cease-fire agreement was made, which gradually weakened our diplomatic position.

Power, in terms of military strength and the will to exert it, is the life blood of effective diplomatic action. This relationship is one of the few things our opponents respect. There is need for a closer working relationship between the Departments of State and Defense. Coordination should extend down to and include the Marine expeditionary unit commander and his diplomatic adviser. Our military posture today requires that we train more officers in international relations, foreign affairs, and military government.

We must appreciate all of the types of war in the spectrum and a national strategy must be evolved which is broad and flexible. It must embrace any or all of the various degrees of war. The strategy of massive nuclear retaliation should be regarded as a cornerstone, not as a panacea. It must not dominate or confine our thinking. The strategy of limited and quasi-wars must be emphasized. Such strategy provides the nation with a feasible way of defeating or at least containing the Soviet threat without mutual annihilation. We must learn to apply power with diplomacy in all of our negotiations with the Communist bloc.

Conventional forces must be strengthened immediately. The balanced fleet with its integral landing force and aviation elements is the nation's most versatile means of implementing our strategy. It can apply graduated combat power practically anywhere along the contested periphery—with either kid gloves or the mailed fist.

US & MC



#### Par for the Course

The Chaplain and I played golf together frequently at Aisugi. One Saturday morning he got off a beautiful 200-yard tee shot that required only a four-foot putt for an eagle.

The Chaplain aimed carefully—and rimmed the cup. He straightened up and stared at the sky for a second.

"Padre, is there any special language you are allowed to use at a time like this?"

"No," he answered shortly, "But at this moment I can spit farther than any other person on this air station!"

\$15.00 to CWO J. D. Shirley

#### Third Person Present

☛ IT WAS A HOT AFTERNOON IN HAWAII, about halfway between Tarawa and Saipan. The beer and the wahine were as much to blame as the PFC for the mutual embrace behind the hibiscus. But when she saw her husband, she yelled MP.

The gunny got there just as she had settled on the routine of sobbing over and over, "MP, he keess me. MP, he keess me."

Gunny glared. "MP, is this true? Did you kiss this woman?"

"Oh, no! What she means is, 'MP, HE keess me.' That PFC, not me."

"I can hear her, lad. If you kissed her, admit it."

Several confused moments later, a flustered MP gladly dropped the whole matter.

Anonymous (\$15.00 to Navy Relief)