

Yale

Yale University Library Digital Repository

Collection Name: Henry A. Kissinger papers, part II

Series Title: Series I. Early Career and Harvard University

Box: 280 **Folder:** 27

Folder Title: "Strategy in the Missile Age by Bernard Brodie," New York Times Book Review

Persistent URL: <http://yul-fi-prd1.library.yale.internal/catalog/digcoll:563746>

Repository: Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library

Contact Information

Phone: (203) 432-1735

Email: mssa.assist@yale.edu

Mail:

Manuscripts and Archives

Sterling Memorial Library

Sterling Memorial Library

P.O. Box 208240

New Haven, CT 06520

Your use of Yale University Library Digital Repository indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use
<http://guides.library.yale.edu/about/policies/copyright>

Find additional works at: <http://yul-fi-prd1.library.yale.internal>

STRATEGY IN THE MISSILE AGE. By Bernard Brodie. 423 pp. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. \$6.50.

by Henry A. Kissinger

It is the essence of revolutions that contemporaries seek to integrate them into what is familiar. Traditional explanations are adapted to account for occurrences never before imagined; old doctrines are made to apply to circumstances not even conceived when they were developed. When the new grows organically out of the old the strain created by this process is sometimes not apparent. But when reality differs radically from our explanation of it, frustration, ambivalence and confusion has been the result.

So it has been with much of Western strategic thought since the advent of nuclear weapons at the end of World War II. The scale of experience on which the "expertise" of most "professional" has been formed has been almost completely overtaken by the new technology. In the past, much of military thought addressed itself to a stable technology; or else it was understood that an advantage could always be gained by increasing the

73
STRATEGY IN THE MISSILE AGE. By Bernard Brodie. 423 pp. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. \$6.50.

by Henry A. Kissinger

It is the essence of revolutions that contemporaries seek to integrate them into what is familiar. Traditional explanations are adapted to account for occurrences never before imagined; old theories are made to apply to circumstances not even conceived when they were developed. When the new grows organically out of the old the strain created by this process is sometimes not apparent. But when reality differs radically from our explanation of it, frustration, ambivalence and confusion has been the result.

So it has been with much of Western strategic thought since the advent of nuclear weapons at the end of World War II. The scale of experience on which the "expertise" of most "professionals" has been formed has been almost completely overtaken by the new technology. In the past, much of military thought addressed itself to a stable technology; or else it was understood that an advantage could always be gained by increasing the

destructiveness of weapons and the speed of their delivery. Now technology is pressing against the margins of what is strategically significant in both these categories. When one bomb can destroy a city and missiles span continents in minutes, little is gained by additional increments of destructiveness and speed. Instead, the manner of employment, the protection of available forces, the balance between offensive and defensive capabilities determine the shape both of strategy and in a sense of politics.

It has been hard for men trained in traditional patterns to adjust to this upheaval. As a result, much of the most fundamental thinking in the field of strategy is now done by scholars, who, unencumbered with an almost useless tradition, have sought to fill an intellectual void.

Bernard Broide is one of these scholars. He was one of the first to recognize the strategic significance of nuclear weapons. He was among those who early saw the paradox that every increase in our destructive ability had a tendency to paralyze the will to resort to it. His writings have influenced most of those who have concerned themselves with this topic.

destructiveness of weapons and the speed of their delivery. New technology

is pressing against the margins of what is strategically significant in

both these categories. When one bomb can destroy a city and missiles span

continents in minutes, little is gained by additional increments of destruc-

tiveness and speed. Instead, the manner of employment, the protection of

available forces, the balance between offensive and defensive capabilities

determines the shape both of strategy and in a sense of politics.

It has been hard for men trained in traditional patterns to adjust

to this upheaval. As a result, much of the most fundamental thinking in the

field of strategy is now done by scholars who, unnumbered with an almost

useless tradition, have sought to fill an intellectual void.

Edward Brody is one of these scholars. He was one of the first

to recognize the strategic significance of nuclear weapons. He was among

those who early saw the paradox that every increase in our destructive

ability had a tendency to paralyze the will to resort to it. His writings

have influenced most of those who have concerned themselves with this topic.

Mr. Brodie's new book maintains the standard of his previous work.

It is written with a rare lucidity. It can therefore be profitably read by layman. At the same time, it represents a level of scholarship and experience which makes it of substantial interest for the expert.

"Strategy in the Missile Age" contains two parts. The first (comprising about a third of the book) deals with origins of air strategy, the second outlines the applications to the future. Part I is a brilliant analysis of the part traditional doctrines have played in shaping American postwar strategic thought. Its scathing commentary on Marshal Foch's theories is a subtle criticism of some current official views. Its compassionate discussion of Douhet goes far to explain the obsession with the offensive in air doctrine and the difficulty we have had in interpreting the lessons of World War II.

The second part entitled "New Problems and New Approaches" of necessity would have difficulty measuring up to this standard. Since the focus is on the future, it is inevitably more conjectural. It discusses brilliantly the wish for total solutions in American strategic thought. With extraordinary clarity it deals with the paradoxes in our strategic

Mr. Brodie's new book maintains the standard of his previous work.

It is written with a rare lucidity. It can therefore be profitably read by laymen. At the same time, it represents a level of scholarship and experience which makes it of substantial interest for the expert.

"Strategy in the Missile Age" contains two parts. The first (comprising about a third of the book) deals with origins of air strategy. The second outlines the applications to the future. Part I is a brilliant analysis of the part traditional doctrines have played in shaping American postwar strategic thought. Its scathing commentary on Marshal Foch's

theories is a subtle criticism of some current official views. Its compassionate discussion of Douhet goes far to explain the obsession with the offensive in air doctrine and the difficulty we have had in inter-

proving the lessons of World War II.

The second part entitled "New Problems and New Approaches" of necessity would have difficulty measuring up to this standard. Since the focus is on the future, it is inevitably more conjectural. It discusses brilliantly the wish for total solutions in American strategic thought. With extraordinary clarity it deals with the paradoxes in our strategic

thought and planning: we are politically committed to the defensive but that we have designed a military establishment which will be most usefull if we strike the first blow. Although we have postulated that a war would start with a Soviet attack on us, we have done next to nothing to protect our civilian population. Even though the Soviet Union has long since developed a capability to attack the United States, our retaliatory force is still insufficiently dispersed and inadequately protected. We speak of NATO as a "trip wire" even though an opponent faced with the certainty of a retaliatory blow would almost surely attack us first.

These and similar paradoxes are brought out extremely well in Mr. Brodie's book. The discussion on the anatomy of deterrence is the best concise summary of a complicated subject. The difficulty with the second half of Mr. Brodie's book is not that the parts of it are not excellent. It is that the tread of the argument is not always apparent. For all the subtlety and inciveness of individual portions there is a somewhat random quality about the section as a whole. It is not always fully clear what over-all conclusion one is to draw from the frequently

thought and planning: we are politically committed to the defensive
 but that we have designed a military establishment which will be most
 useful if we strike the first blow. Although we have postulated that
 a war would start with a Soviet attack on us, we have done next to
 nothing to protect our civilian population. Even though the Soviet
 Union has long since developed a capability to attack the United States,
 our retaliatory force is still insufficiently dispersed and inadequately
 protected. We speak of NATO as a "trip wire" even though an opponent
 faced with the certainty of a retaliatory blow would almost surely attack
 us first.

These and similar paradoxes are brought out extremely well in
 Mr. Brodie's book. The discussion on the anatomy of deterrence is the
 best concise summary of a complicated subject. The difficulty with the
 second half of Mr. Brodie's book is not that the parts of it are not
 excellent. It is that the trend of the argument is not always apparent.
 For all the subtlety and incisiveness of individual portions there is a
 somewhat random quality about the section as a whole. It is not always
 fully clear what over-all conclusion one is to draw from the frequently

brilliant and always lucid analysis.

However, this difficulty may be inherent in the subject matter.

Who can speak definitely when there is so little experience on which to draw? Who would draw final conclusions when even experts have difficulty defining the nature of their disagreements? Mr. Brodie has written a book that illuminates our dilemma. It provides useful tools for thinking about solutions. It deserves to be widely read.



brilliant and always lucid analysis.

However, this difficulty may be inherent in the subject matter.

Who can speak definitely when there is so little experience on which

to draw? Who would draw final conclusions when even experts have difficulty

defining the nature of their disagreements? Mr. Brodie has written a

book that illuminates our dilemma. It provides useful tools for thinking

about solutions. It deserves to be widely read.