

# Book Reviews

*Strategies of Containment*. By John Lewis Gaddis, London: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 432. Cloth.

Reviewed by EDWINA S. CAMPBELL

John Lewis Gaddis' *Strategies of Containment* is a welcome successor to his *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (1972). Gaddis briefly re-examines United States foreign policy before 1947 ("Containment Before Kennan"), before leading us into a consideration of the way the containment idea has formed the basis of American security policy for the past thirty-five years. *Strategies* is a remarkable work of synthesis, of contrasts and comparisons, which provides both a concise history and a stimulating analysis of American policy.

Gaddis is overly modest when he describes himself in the prologue as a "lumper," someone who makes "sweeping generalizations . . . within the symmetrical confines of chapters of books, usually designed to be inflicted upon unsuspecting undergraduates." The generalizations in *Strategies* are never sweeping; Gaddis has successfully worked his way through the complexity and confusion of decisions and events, carefully sorting and classifying what has been most characteristic of American policy. He neither neglects nor denies those events which cannot be generalized, examining instead their significance and relationship to the general themes of the book.

Gaddis identifies five "geopolitical codes" (using the terminology of Alexander George) which have characterized the thinking of America's postwar leadership: George Kennan's original containment strategy (1947-49); the ideas which shaped NSC-68 (1950-53); the Eisenhower-Dulles "New Look" (1953-61); the Kennedy-Johnson strategy of "flexible response" (1961-69); and the variety of assumptions which may be "lumped" together as the Nixon-Ford-Carter years of detente (1969-79). *Strategies* leads us through the evolution of the containment idea, as modified by the American political and diplomatic elite over three decades. It is a fascinating exercise, rather like playing the old parlor game of "telephone": who knows what will be left of the original message once a variety of people have passed it on?

---

Edwina Campbell received her Ph.D. degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1982. She is presently assistant professor of government and foreign affairs at the University of Virginia.

*Strategies'* discussion of the Kennan containment doctrine closely parallels the analysis Gaddis published in *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1977) on the thirtieth anniversary of the "X" article (Kennan's famous analysis of the roots of Soviet foreign policy). Far from calling for the assumption of an infinite number of obligations by the United States, Kennan was concerned that the country keep its commitments in line with its means. "Kennan [made] the point," Gaddis writes, "that because capabilities were limited, *priorities* of interest had to be established." It was the failure to follow this prescription which led the United States eventually into involvements in parts of the globe where it had neither the capacity nor, in fact, the interest to warrant an American commitment.

As Gaddis shows, the problem of defining American interests was never faced directly. As the Truman Administration sought to rally public and Congressional support for its foreign policy initiatives in Europe, it began to employ a rhetoric which eventually imprisoned it in the anti-communist crusade it had not intended to wage. In the late 1940s, however, because the administration fundamentally agreed with Kennan's assumption that means were limited, its actual goals, if not its rhetoric, were also limited. This began to change in 1950 with NSC-68.

Three fundamental changes in Kennan's analysis were made by the drafters of NSC-68. First, they postulated that the *perception* of the global balance of power could be as important as the objective balance itself; the United States might be obliged to commit itself to a part of the world where it had no "real" interest because of the importance of these perceptions. Second, the Soviet Union had military *capabilities* which could make it a threat to American security; assessing Soviet capabilities became the pre-occupation of security officials, not, as Kennan had stressed, Soviet *intentions*. And, finally, NSC-68 disputed the assumption that *means* were as limited as Kennan had thought; the United States economy could absorb much higher levels of spending for national security, and *goals* could expand to take advantage of this spending. Gaddis writes:

What all of these anomalies reflect is a failure of strategic perception: an inability to relate short-term to long-term considerations, to coordinate actions with interests. This failure probably resulted from the way in which NSC-68 was drafted — it was a committee product, not, as in the case of Kennan's strategy, the work of one man; it was also as much a work of advocacy as of analysis, a "bludgeon," as Acheson had put it. Whatever the case, NSC-68's recommendations for action provided less guidance as to how objectives and capabilities were to be combined to produce coherent strategy.

The Eisenhower Administration largely succeeded in cutting back on the means which it used to pursue its foreign policy, but at the cost of reliance on the strategy of "massive retaliation." It continued to exhibit the weakness of seeking to deter any and every apparent communist advance, thus enabling America's adversaries to pick the time and place of confrontation. No attempt was made to define *a priori* what constituted objective threats to the United States, and perceptions retained a high priority.

To attempt to summarize *Strategies'* analysis of the Kennedy-Johnson years and Vietnam as "test cases" of "flexible response" cannot do justice to what Gaddis accomplishes. He thoroughly and persuasively demonstrates that "what happened during the Kennedy administration was a contraction of threats mixed with a proliferation of means over and above what the previous incumbent had been willing to supply." This led to "a containment strategy reminiscent of NSC-68 in its commitment to flexible but appropriate response regardless of costs," a strategy the Johnson Administration tried to implement in Vietnam.

*Strategies* is particularly enlightening in its analysis of the process of foreign policy formulation toward Vietnam. What "the perception of unlimited means" did to the American leadership is thoroughly assessed, and Gaddis reaches the conclusion that:

Far from widening alternatives, the abundance of means, and the consequent lack of incentives to make hard decisions, actually narrowed them. As a result, the postwar administration most sensitive to the need to monitor its own performance found itself ensnared inextricably in a war it did not understand, could not win, but would not leave.

By the time Gaddis begins his discussion of the "odd alliance of Nixon and Kissinger," he has given us a picture of "successive administrations [which] had lost sight of the kind of international order they should have been seeking in the first place." Nixon set out in 1969 to move "from a fixed to a flexible perception of interests in the world, so long as an overall balance of power was maintained." The new administration had not, however, rejected its predecessors' belief in the importance of perceptions of this balance.

Gaddis correctly analyzes the price of the "intellectual coherence" which Henry Kissinger brought to United States foreign policy: a rebellious Congress, a disheartened bureaucracy, and a public longing for moral principles in its foreign policy. There is one problem with the Nixon/Ford years which Gaddis fails to identify, however. It was not that Kissinger's

policies were manipulative or amoral — the fundamental problem was that they were pessimistic. A foreign policy appropriate for the European cabinets proved unnecessarily restrictive and historically false for the United States.

In his appreciation of the limits which nineteenth century European diplomacy had respected, Kissinger was able to reach by a circuitous route Kennan's conclusion that goals must take into account the means available to achieve them. Kennan, however, was fundamentally American in his optimism about the strength and resilience of the United States. Kissinger remained European in his outlook on a claustrophobic international system, with the result that he went beyond an attempt to put ends and means back into proportion, to a foreign policy very nearly reduced to getting the best deal possible in America's age of decline. It was left to the Carter administration, notably in Iran, to reap the unhappy results of this policy.

Gaddis concludes that the post-Kissinger years have seen a continuation rather than a rejection of the policy of containment. The problem of implementing Kennan's original concept remains: that of "distinguish-[ing] rationally, even cold-bloodedly, between peripheral and vital interests, tolerable and intolerable threats, feasible and unfeasible responses." American administrations, Gaddis notes, have fallen prey to "institutional amnesia," the pressures of domestic politics, the search for credibility, and most of all, the "tyranny of means," in their efforts to implement Kennan's recommendations.

The achievement of *Strategies of Containment* is that it examines both the philosophical inconsistencies and the practical problems which have characterized implementation of the containment doctrine. Gaddis has grasped and successfully described the factors which have a real impact on decision-makers within the American bureaucracy. At the same time, he has demonstrated that his five "geopolitical codes" have been neither paper exercises nor *ex post facto* rationalizations. Ideas count, and, criticisms of the United States' proclivity for *ad hoc* crisis management notwithstanding, decision-makers from Kennan to Kissinger have pursued a policy which Gaddis finds "one of the more stable and orderly of modern times."

*Strategies of Containment* is a lucid and absorbing history of that policy. Gaddis has constructed a framework in which we may ponder the difficulties of implementing any such policy — walking the tightrope without looking down, to paraphrase Kennan — in a world where such implementation necessarily depends on fallible men and women. If we are ever to develop the self-confidence not to look down, it will be as a result of our ability to heed and to learn from analyses as insightful as Gaddis' in *Strategies of Containment*.

*A Higher Form of Killing: The Secret Story of Chemical and Biological Warfare.* By Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, pp. xii, 274. \$14.95, cloth.

Reviewed by ALFRED P. RUBIN

The authors, English television journalists, present publicly known facts and argumentation relating to the development and use of chemical and biological warfare since 1915. Their sources include unclassified and declassified government documents. Some other sources, such as the *San Francisco Examiner*, *Bild Zeitung*, and *NBC News*, seem more amusing than reliable. Assertions that rest on uncertain evidence are clearly identified. The facts and uncontradicted reports of possible facts given in this book present a case of overwhelming proportions regarding the horrors of gas and germ warfare and the frivolity with which some statesmen treat those horrors. But the book is not a polemic; it seems to understate the situation and thus produces a deeply disturbing argument by implication against our preparations for offensive gas and germ warfare and the failures of our leaders to consider the results of their actions.

Perhaps the most depressing parts of the tale to an international lawyer describe how legalisms of no conceivable persuasiveness have been used to rationalize forbidden action. For example, Declaration IV, article 2 of the Hague Conference of 1899 says, "The Contracting Powers agree to abstain from the use of projectiles the sole object of which is the diffusion of asphyxiating or deleterious gases." Despite this Declaration, Germany used chlorine gas in 1915 near Ypres. A German newspaper supported the legality of this tactic by indicating the gas was in fact not released from projectiles but from cylinders emplaced in the German lines (p. 5). While it is possible that differences in the risks to the using army might justify the distinction in a technical sense, that distinction loses force in light of the prohibition in the 1899 and 1907 Hague Regulations on the use of "poison" (article 23(a)), and the Hague Conventions' incorporation of the so-called "de Martens Clause."

Until a more complete code of the laws of war is issued, the High Contracting Parties think it right to declare that in cases not included in the Regulations adopted by them, populations and belligerents remain under the protection and empire of the principles of international law, as they result from the usages established between civilized nations, from the laws of humanity, and the requirements of the public conscience.

---

Alfred P. Rubin is professor of international law at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

After the war, on June 17, 1925, legalistic doubts were removed by the Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. It noted that "the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids materials or devices, has been justly condemned by the general opinion of the civilized world"; the parties agreed to be bound by that prohibition to the extent not already so bound by other treaties. In the 1925 Protocol the prohibition on poison gases was also extended to "the use of bacteriological methods of warfare." The United States did not adhere to that protocol until 1975. Another treaty, signed in 1972, forbids the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological and toxin weapons.

For lawyers and non-lawyers alike, the book's primary lesson is that serious statesmen often do not regard their countries' treaty commitments as binding. The authors give evidence that poisons in the form of gases, toxins and microbes apparently have been stockpiled by all powers capable of doing so. Some of these countries have seriously considered first use of these poisons, not merely in retaliation to an enemy's first use. Churchill, traditionally regarded as a humane statesman by Americans, instructed General Ismay on June 30, 1940 to report and make proposals for the use of mustard and other gases against a German invading force in the home islands, making it clear he contemplated first use (p. 111). More surprising, British preparations for the use of these poisons actually increased in the Autumn of 1941 after the threat of the German invasion had receded (p. 113). From 1942 to 1945 the United States opened thirteen new chemical warfare plants (p. 116), although President Roosevelt regarded poison gas as barbaric (p. 117).

With this record, Hitler's failure to use poison gases and bacteriological weapons even facing ultimate defeat as the Allied armies approached Berlin and the recall of poison gas stockpiles by the Japanese High Command in 1944 come as a surprise; we have an ironic reason to be happy that Churchill was on our side during the Second World War.

An interesting twist is put in the record with the revelation in recently declassified documents that the Japanese officials responsible for Detachment 731, a "medical" group performing gruesome experiments on living people in Manchuria, were known to American officials in 1947. The Japanese doctors involved were released from war crimes responsibilities in return for their files (pp. 140, 154).

The authors catalogue the ample evidence that the Soviet Union has actively engaged in the production and stockpiling of forbidden weapons since 1915, and has exported them to other countries (p. 226). The summary of the evidence of the use of Soviet-manufactured mycotoxins

in Laos, Kampuchea and possibly Afghanistan is fair but inconclusive (pp. 236-37).

This brief summary of some of the facts and probabilities skims the surface of a most disturbing book. While nobody would assert that legal prohibitions without verification procedures are adequate to safeguard American (indeed, world) interests against the use of anti-human poisons, the degree to which first use is contemplated and even experimentally (to put it mildly) realized is shocking. The next question, not addressed by Harris and Paxman, is, what should be done about it. If it is a fact, as it seems to be, that the conscience of the world is no longer disturbed by the prospect of warfare by poison, and rules of law are inadequate to limit the risks of such warfare, a moral decision must be made based on our defective knowledge of psychology applied to ourselves, our friends and our possible enemies as to whether our own stockpiles in disregard of the treaty commitments of the United States will serve more to deter the actions of others or to provoke them into a race for bigger and more horrible stockpiles and possible experimental uses, or worse.

If deterrence exists in stockpiles, the legal order would best be served by an open denunciation of the existing treaties coupled with a display of evidence of violations. As Harris and Paxman's work indicates, marshalling such evidence would not necessarily involve exposing any classified information. If the evidence is not sufficient in the light of information known to our leaders but not to the authors, then our own activities along this line ought to cease at once.

If deterrence does *not* exist in stockpiles, then there seems to be no excuse for any American activities with regard to poisons, except to the degree useful to developing antitoxins and defenses.

In either case, American action should be measured against American obligations under the existing treaties and the general international law referred to in the "de Martens Clause" of the 1899 and 1907 Hague Regulations. If we cannot in safety maintain our legal obligations, then the proper course is not to degrade the law, weak as it is, by ignoring it and making our pledged word seem meaningless. If military safety and the stability of international relations are our aim, the easiest way to achieve both ends simultaneously would be to reinforce the law by a reasoned denunciation of the treaties and a public explanation of our behaviour. It certainly would be interesting to hear the leaders of the world's military powers, including those of the United States, explain why it is in anybody's interest to degrade our honor as represented in solemn treaty commitments. The national security interest, if it can be protected at all, does not require that degradation.

*The Group of 77: Evolution, Structure, Organization.* By Karl P. Sauvant, New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1981, pp. 232. \$22.50, cloth.

Reviewed by ROBERT F. MEAGHER

For those interested in how the developing countries have organized themselves to operate and bargain collectively in international organizations, *The Group of 77: Evolution, Structure, Organization* is an excellent primer. The author, Dr. Karl P. Sauvant, is a long-term staff member of the United Nations and is currently affiliated with the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations. He and his colleague Odette Jankowitsch have already put together two series of multi-volumed collections of developing country documents: *The Third World without Superpowers: Collected Documents on the Non-Aligned Countries* and *The Collected Documents of the Group of 77*. These collections are indispensable for any serious scholar of the developing countries. This short, pithy, informative and well written book adds to his already strong reputation as a leading chronicler of the Third World.

In the advent of decolonization following World War II, the newly independent states held a variety of meetings involving diverse combinations of states to find solutions to common political and economic questions. The Bandung Conference in 1955 — one of the better known of such conferences — gathered together Asian and African states to increase concerted political pressure to end still-existing colonialism. This group subsequently evolved into the Non-Aligned States, a movement numbering today over ninety-six countries.

In 1963, a group of seventy-five nations offered a resolution calling for a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The first UNCTAD conference was held in Geneva from March to June 1964. It was at this conference, the first major North-South conference on development questions, that the Group of 77 came into being. The "77" was a slightly reordered group from the seventy-five countries which had originally sponsored the resolution. Today its membership consists of 122 states, close to 79 percent of UN members, and it is the broadest-based and most important organism speaking on behalf of the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The Group of 77 has no permanent headquarters and no permanent secretariat, yet it would be unwise to conclude that it has no influence.

Robert F. Meagher is professor of international law at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.



Its presence is visible at virtually every meeting of every organization included within the UN family.

Sauvant uses UNCTAD as one of his examples illustrating this point: Prior to each UNCTAD conference, approximately every four years, the Asian, African and Latin American members of the Group of 77 hold regional meetings to discuss what should be included in the next UNCTAD agenda. Following the regional meetings, a global meeting is held and the Group of 77 countries work out their differences, publish their conclusions and then use the document in the bargaining with nonmembers of the Group of 77.

In Annex II of the book, Sauvant includes the address of Julius Nyerere to the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77 as well as the *Arusha Programme for Collective Self-Reliance and Framework for Negotiations*, which served as the Group of 77's negotiating document at UNCTAD IV held in Manila in 1979.

The author uses a series of figures to illustrate, *inter alia*, the multi-centered structure of the Group of 77, the sequence of preparations for a session of UNCTAD, the organizational infrastructure of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth Ministerial meeting, and the structure of the 1967-79 Ministerial Meetings.

The thirty-five tables included in the book are an excellent source for those who wish to know which countries are in the Group of 77, the various regional and sundry groups and sub-groups of the Group of 77.

Sauvant has written a succinct analysis of the Group of 77 showing its origins, purposes and objectives, membership and its activities in UNCTAD, UNIDO, the IMF and World Bank, the Group of 19 (i.e., the 1975-77 Conference on International Economic Cooperation), and the United Nations.