CHAPTER TWO
THEORIES OF LIMITED WAR

The advent of Nuclear Revolution has virtually transformed the age old institution of war. The 'absolute' or 'unlimited' form of war has ceased to be an instrument of policy: Victory or defeat no longer carry their traditional connotations; instead stalemate, compromise or negotiated settlements have now taken their place. Limited War\textsuperscript{1} it is agreed is the only form of war that has survived the Nuclear Revolution and that continues to serve as an instrument of policy.

As far back as some 2,500 years ago when the weapons of fighting must have been 'peanuts' compared to what we have today, King Archidamus of Sparata, a man whom Thucydides in his \textit{The Peloponnesian War} describes as reputed for intelligence and moderation, talks of limited war in seasoned and sophisticated language:

And perhaps when they see that our actual strength is keeping pace with the language that we use, they will be more inclined to give way, since their land will

\textbf{1.} Limited War in the nuclear age refers to those conflicts that directly or indirectly involve the possibility of its expansion into a general nuclear war and where it is this fear of its escalation into a nuclear holocaust that is responsible for keeping the warfighting restrained.
still be untouched and, in making up their minds, they will be thinking of the advantages which they still possess and which have not been yet destroyed. For you must think of their lands as a hostage in your possession, and all the more valuable the better it is looked after. You should spare it up to the last possible moment and avoid driving them much harder to deal with.²

Such valuable thoughts were particularly inspired by the devastating wars and the consequent human miseries. However, these thoughts were aimed at maximising gains with minimum losses. The commonly agreed civil and social ethics through the ages have continued to determine the ground rules of war and to lay the broad parameters within which they were to be fought. With the coming of the modern age when religion gradually lost its dominance on the conduct of international relations, we see the simultaneous rise of a more systematic and rational thinking on limitation in warfare. Machiavelli appears to be the first thinker to analyse these issues in objective terms. Surprisingly, Machiavelli has often been condemned as an apologist of ruthless warfare but his conclusions surely speak for limitation in warfare. For Machiavelli 'means' do not carry any ethical values by themselves and are to be judged only by the nature of 'ends' they serve. Therefore no wars are

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justified per se and must be fought for achieving certain political goals or what he calls within the parameters of 'political ethics'.\(^3\) The seventeenth century saw the publication of Hugo Grotius's masterpiece *De Jure Belli et Pacis* (1625) which further highlighted the necessity of limitation in war. To avoid any cruelty or treachery in interstate relations he tried to lay specific rules of war. For instance, any war to be considered "just" had to be preceded by a special 'declaration' to that effect by the aggressor state. He also emphasised on a variety of other restraints which had traditionally been maintained by the belligerents like not spoiling the fruit trees and crops, works of art or churches etc., and cautioned that "...it should be known for CERTAIN, that a war is not a PRIVATE undertaking of bold ADVENTURERS, but made and sanctioned by the PUBLIC and SOVEREIGN on both sides."\(^4\) Similarly, in 18th century Swiss diplomat Enric Vettle wrote and published his *Droit des Gens* (1758) which further refined and systemised these war regu-

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lations intended to render all warfare moderate and humane. Both of these works, written in the backdrop of wars of religion and the advent of Enlightenment, no longer had their conceptions and appeals based on any divine laws or religious sanctions. Instead they appealed to the enlightened self-interest of various nation-states and taught them how peace and prosperity of one was linked with the peace and prosperity of all. The nineteenth century, of course saw, among others, the writings of Karl von Clausewitz - a man whose observations on war have hardly found an equal. Clausewitz tried to establish that war in order to remain a war must remain nothing but an instrument of policy. The history of the 19th century is, in fact, dotted with efforts that were made towards effecting limitation in war. The most important among these were the two unique international peace conferences that were organised at The Hague. Surely these peace conferences as also numerous other efforts, had a great deal of influence in building new currents of opinion but they were partly also only the by-products of the surrounding socio-political settings. Therefore, it would perhaps be more worthwhile to make a brief survey of the social setting of the modern age and to study how it moulded various theories of limitation in war. This will also greatly help us in understanding the contributions of various limited war theorists.
The simple truth is that war, like other social institutions, only reflects the composition of various structures of society at large especially force structures, their inter-relationship and rigidity, the levels of weapon technology, styles of warfare and other organisational forms and systems. Fighting became a matter of a class and increasingly the membership of this class became hereditary. All friendships and alliances amongst these principalities were based on the considerations of security and were cast in the mould of marriages and written agreements. In fact right up to the modern ages there were neither regular standing armies nor large powerful nation-states nor absolute rulers. The officers of these dynastic armies as well as diplomats, like their rulers, were often related to the ruling families in various other states and therefore carried a transnational identity which went beyond their obligations to any one of these Kings. Armies were raised by them only at times of war and these officers often enjoyed the prerogative of


deciding as to which side they will be fighting from. Wars for them were often an occasion to display their professional art and there they fought not for any passionate loyalties to any king or nationality but for the sake of their personal honour and prestige. Consequently they not only could not be pressurised to carry out any mean, cruel and treacherous battles but were also free from any collective hatred of the enemy. Masses of their soldiery were often composed of dregs of society - the criminals, the debtors, the unemployed and other vagabonds - who fought because they needed money or because they were forced to fight and not because they passionately loved their fatherland. Therefore, in order to avoid desertions armies were often discouraged from roving and plundering the civilians as it provided an ideal settings for desertions. Thus as Marshall de Saxe wrote about the 17th century wars, for him all these factors "went far to limit tactics to close order operations - those carried out under the eyes of officers - because the only escape from the lash was desertion." 7

Another major reason for this absence of large standing armies under a central control was the sheer economic burden

which they involved and which these small principalities with their limited resources and manpower could not afford.

At the opening of modern ages, for instance, when recruiting of regular armies came into vogue, expenditures on military affairs in France, Russia and England - three major powers of Europe - often exceeded two-thirds of their annual budgets. This very reason also made it impossible for these powers to undertake any long-drawn wars, wars of larger magnitude or with more than one enemies at a time. Accordingly, wars during the most of 18th and 19th centuries were fought often for very limited and specific gains like effecting some adjustments in certain territorial boundaries, succession politics or issues of trade, markets or resources etc. Even in settling these issues preference was given to other measures like palace intrigues, deceit or sheer demonstration of one's force and alliance to pressurise any potential adversary.

But perhaps the most important factor for keeping the wars so limited over these centuries was lack of appropriate means. It was this absence of technological developments at its present scale that had kept the instrument of war as of such inconsequence and insignificance that it was. It is

a common knowledge that developments in technology take place at geometrical pace. It comes simply as a rude shock to know "that so simple a device as the stirrup - the one link needed to turn the armoured horseman into an effective lance - could have completely eluded antiquity and not become widespread until the early middle ages." Highlighting the importance of this invention in the medieval era Robert O'Connell says:

It could be said without exaggerating over-much that the entire Middle Ages was built on the few bits of leather and metal. For without the stirrup, the medieval lancer, to which the entire economic system was dedicated, could not have constituted a fully credible weapons system.

Three major forces which in the backdrop of Religious wars and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars of France gave, for the first time, a serious jolt to the bastions of limited war were the forces of nationalism, democracy and the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution, for instance, flooded the European continent with its rapid multiplication of goods and services like fuels, metals, transportation, communications, etc. and gave a great

9. n.6, p.10.
10. Ibid., p.85.
thrust to research and development in military technology which, together with the emergence of the money economy, free-market and powerful nation states, resulted in creating an unprecedented potential for destruction. Before this unprecedented increase in the destructiveness of weapons unfolded itself, injection of highly charged emotional and ideological issues as war aims had been the traditional factors in increasing the intensity of warfare. In modern times this job was to be ideally performed by the twin slogans of nationalism and democracy. Napoleon, the man who had exploited these twin slogans during his wars against European monarchies, will perhaps continue to stand distinctively in the annals of history for this single-handed transformation of war. His slogan of democracy whereas on the one hand had shattered the very basis of Europe's homogeneous oligarchic politics that had conducted war as well as politics for merely a limited and prosaic objectives. National pride on the other unleashed the vast untapped resources of a 'nation-at-arms'. General Ferdinand Foch who was commander of Allied armies in the First World War aptly explained the situation when at the opening of his book *The Conduct of War* he wrote:

The old systems of war, seeking to spare the armed forces, tried to achieve their objectives by stratagems, threats, negotiations, manoeuvre, partial actions, occupation of hostile territory and the capture of fortified places. Since Napoleon, war is conducted
without regard to wastage; it recognises only one argument: Force. Not until the enemy has been crushed in the battle and annihilated by pursuit, is there any question of parley with him.11

But still a century had elapsed before the monster of total war had re-emerged on the international scene (World War I). And apart from the defeat of Napoleon the two other important factors which had kept the bastions of limited war well fortified during this era were the great system of balance of power which had been effectively restored by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the colonial expansion of the great European powers which had successfully absorbed and distracted various unprecedented developments in the science of navigation and other military technologies and had thus postponed their igniting any general war in Europe. But this could not sustain for ever. And by the end of the 19th century when most of the opportunities for colonial expansion had been exploited, colonial conflicts were now threatening to ignite a total war in Europe. Other factors which had discredited the institution of limited war were the unification of Italy and Germany who also wanted to build their colonial empires; rise of non-European centres of power like Japan and the United States, the relative decline

of Great Britain who had all through acted as a 'balancer' of peace in Europe and, finally, the Kaiser Wilhelm's dropping of Bismark in 1890 which proved fatal to the Prussian resurgence as great European power. The complicated system of transitory alliances and alignments maintained by Bismark and the British leadership slowly gave way to a simple system of rigid and permanent alliances amongst European powers. Europe on the eve of the Great war of 1914 was clearly divided between two opposing coalitions called the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. But the story of total war did not come to an end even with the conclusion of this Great war. A century long peace (in relative terms) was sustained in Europe following the defeat of Napoleon because the Concert of Europe had successfully rehabilitated and reassimilated France into the European balance of power but the Treaty of Versailles was discriminatory and a succession of developments resulted in the horrors of another total war following which the system of balance of power was replaced by a new system of balance of terror and ever since we have continued to live in peace (i.e. absence of total war) preserved by the spectre of nuclear war.

The whole of the inter-war period (1919-1939) was dominated by the ongoing competition amongst European powers in perfecting their strategies and industries of airwarfare. Thus General Guderian in Germany, Guilo Douhet in Italy and
Major-General J.F.C. Fuller and Captain Basil H. Liddle Hart in Great Britain were some of the great names in the field whose work was later to greatly facilitate the understanding and evolution of various nuclear warfighting doctrines of the nuclear age. But whereas the majority of others perceived the scenario as having greatly enhanced the values of offensive warfighting and had variously prescribed for sudden 'blizkrieg', 'an avalanche of terror' and the 'command of the Air' it was only Liddle Hart who in this increasing destructiveness of war visualized only greater need for moderation and limitation in warfare. In fact in the total war scenario of the twentieth century world Liddle Hart can safely be described as the first thinker on limited war.\textsuperscript{12}

B.H. Liddle Hart

All kinds of warfighting doctrines which today talk of diminishing death and destruction in war can be more or less

\textsuperscript{12} Freedman, Lawrence, \textit{The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy}, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1983) He describes Liddle Hart as "The intellectual father of contemporary theories of limited war". (p.97); Paret, Peter, \textit{Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), though calls him only one of the great thinkers on limited war, lists various works where Liddle Hart has described as an outstanding pioneer of limited war ideas in the twentieth century. (p.600); also Lider, Julian, \textit{On the Nature of War}, (Hampshire (England): Gower Press, 1979), see p.64.
traced back to Liddle Hart's strategy of Indirect Approach. For him the necessity of limitation in war was not any pragmatic response to exigencies of a given time and space but was part of his broader philosophical framework where it was axiomatic that since wars were destructive to the peace and normalcy in international relations they ought to be avoided and, if necessary, must be limited. Of course, in the immediate context his experiences in the first World War had a great deal to do with his advocacy of limited war. And therefore, against all sorts of odds and oppositions, he continued to advocate for limited war, all through his life.

Developments in the science and technology of aviation appeared to Liddle Hart as fitting into his scheme of things. Aircraft that could swiftly reach the enemy forces had a great advantage in effecting limitation in warfare, as it could easily achieve the "dislocation of enemy's psychological and physical balance" at the earliest without the painful necessity of slogging endlessly "along the lines of natural expectation." But unlike his contemporary scholars of 1920s, who were overwhelmed by the series of new

inventions aircraft was not, for Liddle Hart, the ultimate determinant of the nature of war. In his book Europe in Arms he strongly disputed the view that a mechanised force would swiftly pierce the defence unless, of course, he said that the forces of the enemy were completely unmechanised or were taken by surprise. He also refuted the belief that airpower could easily tip the balance in favour of attacker and explained how victory in any war cannot be obtained by virtue of an air attack alone. He gradually came to the conclusion that the use of aircraft had brought to the fore the bluntness and inaccuracy of its operations. Battles, as a consequence, were becoming far more brutal and inhumane which made moderation and negotiation a distant dream. Airpower therefore was making wars only more destructive and prolonged affair. Besides, it also seemed to hurt Liddle Hart's sense of warfighting as an art.

Another great challenge to the limited war doctrine of Liddle Hart came from the Nuclear Revolution which once again placed the onus of victory and defeat on a single weapon itself. Scholars worldwide came to the conclusion that the institution of total war had come to stay.


15. n.12, p.98.
cially for the American scholars, war was now limited only by the quality and quantity of one's military capabilities. But Liddle Hart arrived at an entirely different verdict. Instead of looking at the individual events like the prevailing nuclear monopoly of the United States, he tried to analyse this fact in the broader perspective of future trends in the nuclear age. And once again he came to the conclusion which re-enforced the validity of limited war doctrine. He said:

When both sides possess atomic power, 'total warfare' makes nonsense. Total war implies that the aim, the effort and the degree of violence are unlimited. Victory is pursued without regard to consequence.... Any unlimited war waged with atomic power would be worse than non-sense; it would be mutually suicidal.16

Secondly, Liddle Hart also refuted the belief that with the advent of nuclear weapons war had ceased to be an instrument of inter-state politics. He strongly believed that it was by no means certain that "warfare will completely disappear." Unless, he said, "the belligerents were crazy, it is likely that any future war will be less unrestrained and more subject to mutually agreed rules.17

17. Ibid., p.102.
most scholars were only grappling with the implications and magnitude of nuclear weapons, Liddle Hart's views on the limited war in the nuclear age were too early to be appreciated and understood. Well known American scholar Edward Mead criticised Liddle Hart as being 'nostalgic' of obsolete ideas. But this did not deter this scholar who continued to develop and propagate his ideas. In a book published in 1960, after the successful explosion of the hydrogen bomb, he once again questioned the validity of fighting a total war. He asked:

Would any responsible government, when came to the point, dare to use the H-bomb as an answer to limited and local aggression?...To the extent that H-bomb reduces the likelihood of full-scale war, it increases the possibilities of limited war pursued by widespread local aggression...the value of strategic bombing has largely disappeared - except as the last resort.18

By the 1970s, that is towards the closing stages of America's involvement in the Vietnam war, Liddle Hart was quite satisfied by the success that the limited war doctrines had made. But at the same time he was pained by the fact that though limitation-in-warfare had made its mark in the conduct of inter-state relations, the nuclear age had thrown up an entirely new challenge of insurgency wars which

"have tended towards the worst excesses" and which were the greatest challenge to the peace and stability in the world.

He observed:

The habit of violence takes much deeper root in irregular warfare than it does in regular warfare. In the later it is counteracted by the habit of obedience to constituted authority, whereas the former makes a virtue of defying authority and violating rules. It becomes very difficult to rebuild a country, and a stable state on such an undermined foundations.

Here it is significant to note that Liddle Hart's advocacy limited war had far preceded the advent of nuclear age. It was not, therefore, a by-product of the awe-inspiring nuclear weapons, but was derived from his objective study of the age old institution of war. In fact as early as the mid-1950s he had greatly inspired and influenced the entire new generation of nuclear strategists. Accordingly, his contribution towards the evolution various warfighting doctrines in the nuclear age remains outstanding. Bernard Brodie, who can easily be credited as being the first in America to seriously initiate a nationwide debate on the theories of limited war has paid his tribute to Liddle Hart. In a letter to him dated 26th April, 1957, Brodie wrote:

I became, in effect, a follower of yours in 1952, when I learned... that a thermonuclear weapon would be tested in the following autumn and would probably be successful.... You led all the rest of us in advocating the principle of limited war.20

LIMITED WAR IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

The contribution of the Nuclear Revolution in the development of theories of limited war was unique in two important ways: (i) For the first time the advent of nuclear weapons had made the fighting of an 'absolute' war, which was only a theoretical construct for Clausewitz, an actual possibility; the destructive potential of nuclear weapons virtually knew no limits. (ii) This unlimited destructiveness of nuclear weapons made limited war as the ultimate tool in the conduct of international relations as any war expanded beyond this would cease to be an instrument of policy, and therefore theoretically speaking cease to be war. Accordingly, the debate on war-limitations in the nuclear age is qualitatively different from all historical manifestations of limited war.21 And this obviously makes


limited war as the greatest challenge to the understanding of peace and war in the nuclear age.

However, the task for these scholars in establishing these simple truth was not an easy one. Despite arguments in favour of limited war by scholars like Liddle Hart and others and in spite of practical experiences of the miseries and destruction during the two World Wars, it was still only the total war that was in fashion at the advent of the nuclear age. To the Americans, however, for whom war had always been a clean and efficient operation in distant lands - 'over there' - the discovery of nuclear weapons seemed to simplify the problem of war and peace by making war total land, therefore, unacceptable. The way in which these initial American perceptions about nuclear war had boosted the morale of war-mongers was portrayed by Walter Lipmann:

...here is war that requires no national effort, no draft, no training no discipline, but only money and engineering know-how of which we have plenty. Here is the panacea which enables us to be the greatest military power on earth without investing time, energy, sweat, blood and tears and - as compared with the cost of a great Army, Navy and Air Force - not even much money.22


22. Lipmann, Walter, "Why we are disarming ourselves?", Redbrook Magazine (September 1946), p.106.
In fact most of the studies\textsuperscript{23} that followed the discovery of the atom bomb came to similar conclusions describing it as an 'ideal weapon for aggressors', 'destructive beyond the wildest nightmares', and a weapon that could 'decide the issues on the first day of the war' and so on. Even a simple mention of the necessity for limiting warfighting capabilities was frowned upon and discarded. In fact as late as in 1958 a book by Paul Kecskemeti\textsuperscript{24} of the RAND Corporation that tried to explain how in the new scenario of both the adversaries possessing atomic weapons, the old US traditions of fighting for unconditional surrender had become invalid, raised a furore in various academic circles. Senator Russell of Georgia who was then Chairman of the Senate Armed Force Services Committee went to the extent of even seeking an amendment in that year's military appropriations bill that would ensure that taxes were not used to

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finance any studies that examined "the circumstances under which the United States would surrender to an aggressor." 25

Bernard Brodie:

Only a few months after the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Bernard Brodie, then at the Yale University, became the first scholar (along with his colleagues) to publish a book concerning nuclear weapons. The book entitled The Absolute Weapon came to the startling conclusions that scenarios of total war were nothing more than hallucinations. The book suggested that due to their unprecedented destructive power, nuclear weapons would no longer be useful tools for implementing state policy. But their threatening presence will act as "a powerful inhibitor to aggression." 26 Brodie flamboyantly declared: "Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars, from now on its chief purpose must be to avert them." 27 This is a much quoted sentence which is a good summary of nuclear strategy.


The book seemed to suggest that war had ceased to be an instrument of policy and that for the future conduct of international relations an alternative strategy had to be discovered. However, as a result of America's follow-up studies into the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the emerging Cold War confrontation, and his personal explorations into the field of nuclear strategy, Brodie slowly came to recognise some positive role for atomic weapons. He concluded that though alternative strategies had to be developed the significant political role that nuclear weapons could not be ignored.

Two historic developments contributed to the evolution of theories of limited war. Firstly, much to the surprise and dismay of the American think tanks and political and military leadership, the USSR exploded its first atomic bomb in August 1949. This was soon followed by the outbreak of

28. The Effects of Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), pp.18-22. This volume of US Strategic Bombing Survey was published under the personal supervision of Paul Nitze who was subsequently to be advisor to five American Presidents and who had extensively toured Hiroshima and Nagasaki to acquire first hand knowledge about the impact of Atomic bombing. According to him the Atom was in no way the absolute weapon and its impact could further be reduced by taking advance measures like evacuation, shelters, industrial decentralization etc.

the Korean war where much to the shock and frustration of American leadership, especially its defence forces, America could not use its atomic muscles despite having to swallow a humiliating compromise. For the first time it was realised that Europe would not be the only battle-ground in the East West struggle and that aggression need not necessarily be in the form of full-scale war. Then America's success in building a hydrogen bomb was within months, nullified by the Soviet thermonuclear test. Therefore, much before it was officially pronounced as America's nuclear strategy 'massive retaliation' was already under fire. Brodie, who had described nuclear weapons as significant elements of deterrence came to propagate restraint. Writing in *Reporter* in November 1954 he cautioned: "The availability of this threat as a source of deterrent will be increasingly limited only to the most outrageous kind of direct aggression" and warned his contemporary scholars not to rely on the deterrent of total war and to "explore ways of consciously limiting those conflicts we may be unable to avoid." 30 These exhortions, for sure, timely and eventually led to a nation-wide debate clarifying the theory of limited war.

Brodie's own thinking on limited war, which was greatly influenced by the advent of thermonuclear bomb and by America's experiences in the Korean war, was formally presented in his *Strategy in the Missile Age.* The thermonuclear weapons for him had not only stripped the important concepts like 'victory' of their conventional meanings without providing any new definitions to them but had even debased the currency of popular slogans like 'fighting to the last man', or 'worst than death' etc. Death now could come even before the victim discovered that a war had broken out. All this made it "difficult to imagine a set of positive national objectives that could be realized in such a war." Similarly he observed how until the Korean war and especially during the American monopoly on atomic weapons technology it was axiomatic for Americans that war meant only total war. It was only for the Korean war to prove anew how great powers sometimes prefer to test each others' strength and resolution with limited violence and this itself "demonstrated" to him "some of the major constraints necessary to

keep a war limited."

According to Brodie any war to qualify as limited war must be operated under two important types of restraints i.e. deliberate restraint and massive restraint. For him, the term limited war did not apply to the conflicts where the belligerents did not have any capability to make them total. Rather, unlimited and total war always remained the obvious and immediate alternative; that is what made the restraint of keeping the conflict limited, deliberate. Similarly, the restraint also must be massive: the minimum requirement in this category was that there would not be any strategic bombing of cities with nuclear this at a time when strategic thinking was dominated by the ideas of 'strategic bombing' and 'command of the Air' etc. Brodie urged that at least a limited was must ensure that "there is no strategic bombing between the United States and the Soviet Union." 34

Defining the doctrine of limited war in the nuclear age and comparing it with the earlier ones Bernard Brodie wrote:

If wars were limited in ages past, the reason why they were so have little relevance for us today. Apart from the existence of moral, religious and dynastic scruples, and in fact that anything as basic as nation-

33. Ibid., p.308.
34. Ibid., p.310.
al existence or even the survival of a dynasty was rarely at stake, wars were kept limited by small margin of the national economic resources available for mobilization and by the small capability for destruction that could be purchased with that narrow margin. Today, on the contrary, we speak of limited war in a sense that connotes a deliberate hobbling of a tremendous power that is already mobilized and that must in any case be maintained at a very high pitch of effectiveness for the sake of only inducing the enemy to hobble himself to the like degree.35

The situation, according to Brodie, was entirely unprecedented and had no comparables of its kind in history. In fact, it was not even as simple as putting deliberate and massive restraints on one's military resources but as he said:

The chief problem of limited war today is the problem of finding sanctions for keeping out of action, on a stable basis, just those existing instruments which from a strictly military point of view are far the most efficient and which tend to be dangerously vulnerable to attack while on the ground36 (emphasis original).

William Kaufmann:

Another scholar who contributed substantially in the evolution of limited war theories also came from Yale University. Kaufmann was not only deeply troubled by the chaotic warfighting in Korea with over 137,000 American

35. Ibid., p.311.
36. Ibid.
casualties but was also greatly inspired by the exhortions of Bernard Brodie urging American scholars to deliberate on alternative warfighting strategies for the nuclear age. His edited book *Military Policy and National Security* published in 1956 therefore provided an ideal forum for scholars on military strategy.

William Kaufmann was originally a strong critic of the policy of massive retaliation which was apparently meant to wrest the advantages of initiating aggression from the Soviets and to obtain for the United States more freedom to manoeuvre in the conduct of international affairs. Having been a student of American foreign policy and history, Kaufmann strongly believed that "it is quite out of character for us to retaliate massively against anyone except in the face of provocations as extreme as Pearl Harbour." According to him Soviet leadership was highly cautious, cool and calculating. It not only had an extremely flexible war apparatus at hand but also had the ability to retreat and advance according to the contingencies of a given conflict. No genuine reconciliation was ever possible between the

Soviet and the Western systems. Kaufmann predicted that communist powers would not only fight at the peripheral areas to expand territorially but also will test the limits of US tolerance. And in this emerging new scenario, he argued:

If the communists should challenge our sincerity, and they would have good reason to do so, we would either have to put up or shut up. If we put up, we would plunge into the immeasurable horrors of an atomic war. If we shut up, we would suffer a serious lose of prestige and damage in our capacity to establish deterrence against further communist aggressions.

Kaufmann foresaw that the strategy of limited war was the only alternative to the present paradoxical situation of choosing between retreat and nuclear holocaust. He admitted that it may not be an adequate substitute for victory yet was the only pragmatic policy that could ensure peace as it once again offered "the prospects of bringing military means and policy aims into a much closer relationship that they had enjoyed for many years." For him limited war involved all kinds of limitations of area, number of participants and

number and categories of weapons. All these restrictions were significant as they helped in keeping a modern war limited and controlled and thereby subservient to the given policy aims. Yet any conflict to qualify as limited war essentially involved, for Kaufmann, "foregoing the use of atomic weapons [even] for tactical purposes". He wrote:

...so long as one of the objectives of the policy is to keep a conflict limited...it is even arguable that we should be prepared to accept limited setbacks rather than resort to any radical change in the area and weapons of conflict.41

He introduced the concept of 'nuclear threshold' which he called the most sensitive line of demarcation between limited war and all-out nuclear war. Kaufmann was particularly against the use of nuclear weapons in any war. Though for reasons of deterrence he favoured continuous progress in the development of various types of small and big nuclear weapons, yet he cautioned that they can only be used as weapons of last resort. Even then they must be used only in vanquishing armies and capturing territories and not to destroy cities as that will for once remove all conceivable limitation of war. Same was also true if one of the adversaries were to initiate a strategic nuclear attack on the

homeland of the other. (This idea of Kaufmann of 'counter force' was later to be developed and presented by later Secretary of Defence, Robert S. McNamara as his 'no-cities' doctrine in his strategy of 'flexible response').

Writing his second important book in 1964, The McNamara Strategy, Kaufmann concluded that perhaps his 'limited non-nuclear war' was not the only or ideal type of war for the nuclear age. For him it appeared that a non-nuclear limited war could be as devastating as was the second World War and would hardly make a sensible proposition.42 He observed that in the post-war period America's capabilities were rapidly changing under the impact of emerging new military technologies. Also he found that the America forces which had fought the second World War without friction were suffering from acute inter-Services rivalries which had made its "impossible to agree on post-war strategic plans and force structures". And in this chaotic situation "whatever strategic concepts were designed in the face of these uncertainties were bound to be tentative and subject to early change."43 Guerrilla warfare, he saw, was another kind of war which was becoming successful in the nuclear age.


43. Ibid., p.19.
Within just six years of the surrender of Japan the United States had experienced this type of aggression in the Philippines, Greece, and Korea. The British had suffered it in Malaya and France in Indochina. As if the problems of strategy and forces in the United States were already not complex enough, the communists had 'revived this ancient technique of guerrilla warfare in order to exploit the vulnerabilities of those areas which had been thrown into turmoil by the ravages of the World War II.' 44 Though he said this subject was not an issue of great concern in America's strategic thinking as it "lacked a powerful backer", yet he was quite sure that it would soon "become very fashionable indeed". 45

Robert Osgood

Compared with the works of Brodie and Kaufmann the works of Robert Osgood are not directly an outcome of the advent of nuclear revolution. As he himself asserts if his analyses are sound then they will be valid even if nuclear weapons were never invented or even if other weapons of mass-destruction-chemical, biological were not known. And

44. Ibid., p.17.
45. Ibid.
this brings him closer to the philosophy of Basil Liddle Hart. For instance, in highlighting the necessity for a limited war strategy he derives his basic postulates of 'primacy of politics' and 'economy of force' from a broader philosophical premise:

Because of the imperfection of man, force is a moral necessity, an indispensable instrument of justice. Therefore, men are confronted with the fact that their own imperfection makes both force and restraints of force equally imperative... There is no way to escape this dilemma. Men can only mitigate its effects. The aim should be, not to abolish force in society, but to moderate it and control it so as to promote social purpose in a manner most compatible with ideal standards of human conduct.46

Then trying to translate these philosophical principles into the actual use of military power by the nations he asserts that any warfighting doctrines must, first of all, qualify the tests of 'morality' and 'expediency' and must ensure that war continues to be only a means to certain ends and does not become an end in itself. They must also comply with the commonly accepted rules of international community and if possible the adversaries should have a tacit agreement on the types and implications of various warfighting doctrines likely to be used. His principles of 'primacy of

politics' and 'economy of force' seem to be ideally suited for the situation. According to the first principle of 'primacy of politics' the only justification for building military force is that it is an essential prerequisite for national security and also serves in achieving a nation's political objectives. And therefore 'in order that military power may serve as a controllable and predictable instrument of national policy, it must be subjected to exacting political discipline.' Then playing safe against the possibilities of some corrupt or inapt political regimes misusing the instrument of military force, he prescribes certain limitations also on political objectives which he says 'must be not merely desirable but also attainable' i.e. that these objectives must be "themselves moral -or at least as consistent with universal principles as the ambiguities of international relations permit" and at the same time must also be "appropriate to the nature of force..." And it is here that his principle of 'economy of force' comes to the fore. This principle seeks to ensure that "no greater force should be employed than is necessary to achieve the objective towards which it is directed." Thereby it

47. Ibid., p.14.
49. Ibid., p.18.
not only ensures the most efficient and effective use of limited resources at hand and qualifies the test of expediency but also is morally valid as it also guarantees that force be used most "sparingly and as sparingly as is consistent with the attainment of national objectives at stake." Any warfighting doctrine, according to Osgood, to be both 'effective' as well as 'rational' must comply with these twin principles. He concludes that a strategy of limited war which "maximises the opportunities for the effective use of military force as a rational instrument of national policy" ideally qualifies these tests.

Coming to the context of American foreign policy in the nuclear age the question of supreme importance, according to Robert Osgood, was: "How can the United States employ military power as a rational instrument of foreign policy when the destructive potentialities of war exceed any rational purpose?" Any answer to this involved, in the first place, responsibility for deterring all total war aggressions and also defeating the less-than-total ones. Though, America's capacity for total war was sufficient to deter warfighting in general yet "unless the nation can also wage

50. Ibid.
52. Ibid., p.1.
limited war successfully, communists aggression may force the United States to choose between the total war, non-resistance or ineffective resistance." 53 And deriving from America's debacle in the Korean war he concludes: "If this nation lacks recourse to the methods of limited war, it will face a fatal dilemma in the event of a limited Communist aggression" which would either mean "incurring the exorbitant sacrifices of total nuclear war" or would entail "a series of piecemeal military or diplomatic defeats that will so shaken America's relative power position and so undermine its prestige as to leave little to choose between the gradual paralyses of inaction and the sudden disaster of all out war." 54

The extraordinary significance of limited war in the nuclear age was, for Osgood, obvious because of two important conditions: Politically, it was the existence of a powerful adversary which was bent upon seizing every opportunity to extend its sphere of control; and, secondly militarily it was the advent of incredibly destructive nuclear, biological, chemical weapons that had made total war no longer usable instrument as such a war was sure to bring

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., p.5.
national catastrophe for both the victor as well as the vanquished. But whereas prescription for limited war was obvious and apparent yet building a strategy of limited war or defining this concept was not that easy. As Robert Osgood himself admitted limited war was "not a uniform phenomena", it meant different things to different people. War could be limited in different ways and could be limited in some and not limited in others. For instance, a war limited in geographical terms may be unlimited in weapons employed or the targets involved. Similarly a war may be limited for one of the adversaries yet unlimited in the eyes of the other. Even within the strategic community and even amongst the scholars on limited war there were widespread differences of opinion on what finally is a limited war. Osgood tried and gave a definition which till date remains the most satisfactory and comprehensive definition of limited war:

A limited war is one in which the belligerents restrict the purposes for which they fight to concrete, well defined objectives that do not demand the utmost military effort of which the belligerents are capable and that can be accommodated in a negotiated settlement. Generally, speaking a limited war involves only two (or very few) major belligerents in the fighting. The battle is confined to a local geographical area and directed against selected targets—primarily those of direct military importance. It demands of the belligerents only a fractional commitment of their human and physical resources it permits their economies, social
and political patterns of existence to continue without serious disruption. 55

And this definition remained more or less undisputed until finally in 1979 Osgood himself assailed it. For him those theories of limited war which drew from traditions of Clausewitz and were popular with America's liberal-democratic thinking and for whom the limitation of objectives was the only decisive limitation on war were only partial truth. Writing an epilogue to America's experiences in Vietnam war he candidly confessed that even in the nuclear age there was a category of limited war which was still limited because of limitation of means - a category which most American scholars of limited war had either totally overlooked or simply visualized as a category completely controlled and directed by the greater powers themselves. This, however, was not true. He explains how the surcharged environment of the Cold War was responsible for the obsession of American scholars with a particular kind of war. And this obsession had particularly heightened because of the fear of growing Soviet nuclear capabilities and the arms race that had virtually replaced the actual warfighting. Basing his argument on these premises Osgood wrote:

55. Ibid., pp.1-2.
Actually there have been two strands of the resurgence of limited war theories and doctrines since World War II, reflecting two different political perspectives in the Cold War. One strand inspired by the concepts of Clausewitz and propounded by Western political scientists and defense specialists has sought to make force, in both war and deterrence, an effective instrument of containment... The other strand, inspired by Mao Tse-Tung and Third World nationalism and propounded by revolutionary nationalists has sought to use guerrilla warfare to abolish Western colonialism and hegemony and establish new nations ostensibly dedicated to social justice.56

For Osgood whereas the former strand relied on deliberate restraint the second strand envisions the use of limited means - i.e. strategy of insurgency - to achieve total political objectives. Then he examines limited war under three different categories of Central War, Local War and Unconventional war. For him, the popularity of Counter insurgency, which was meant to tackle unconventional war or internal wars, had sharply declined following the Vietnam war and the US government preferred to assist Counterinsurgency rather than getting directly involved. Similarly, the Central War involving nuclear weapons is also not very popular. Thus for him it is conventional local war that remains today the most practical form of limited war though there might arise contingencies requiring other two categories to become operational.

Henry Kissinger

Osgood's book on limited war was immediately followed by the publication of Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*. Unlike the former's balanced and philosophical study of limited war and its history, Kissinger's was a straightforward appeal for adopting a limited nuclear war strategy; and for that reason this soon became a much more famous and controversial book. In a way Kissinger's book overshadowed the potential of Osgood's so much so that most debates about Kissinger's book analysed his conclusions by contrasting them with the views of William Kaufmann — then the greatest critic of limited nuclear war — and Osgood stayed aloof as an objective philosopher of limited war.

As William Kaufmann was the brain behind the 'flexible response' of McNamara who had tried to extend deterrence into the actual operations of war by keeping the war limited and its escalation under control, Henry Kissinger was the man behind the Nixon Administration's adoption of the strategy of 'Limited Nuclear Options' popularly known as Schlesinger Doctrine. But whereas Kaufmann had a clear

57. This doctrine was the result of extensive studies that were done by top-level experts from Pentagon headed by Henry Kissinger himself (then National Security Advisor) who had been directed by President Richard Nixon in mid-1972 to develop more options at the strategic nuclear level and had submitted its final report, that was later known as National Security Decision Memorandum-242 dated 17th January, 1974.
preference for conventional aspects of limited war and all through his life propagated for improvement of this 'conventional shield' so that it could provide a longer 'pause' before resorting to nuclear weapons. Henry Kissinger, at least initially, had a clear preference for tactical nuclear war. But, apart from gradual balancing of his ideas about the significance of both nuclear as well as conventional weapons in a limited war his views on limited war remain essentially the same that were first propounded in *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*.58

Kissinger had observed how the awesome powers of nuclear weapons had "brought about a tacit non-aggression treaty:

58. For instance, in an article entitled "Limited War: Conventional or Nuclear? - A Reappraisal" in *Daedalus*, Vol.89, No.4 (1960) he admits that nuclear weapons are not the only weapons of limited: "The more pressures build up against any use of nuclear weapons, the greater will be the gap between our deterrent policy, our military capability and our psychological readiness - a gap which must tempt aggression. The years ahead must therefore see the substantial strengthening of the conventional forces of free world" (p.91). But as for his faith in the indispensability of Limited War it continued to be as strong as ever. In his next book *Necessity for Choice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961) he said: "The stronger the limited war forces of the free world, the larger will have to be the inhibitions against initiating hostilities. In this sense a capability of limited war is necessary in order to enhance the deterrent power of the retaliatory force." (p.62) Even as late as 1979 when he wrote *The White House Years* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979) his views on American strategy continued to be the same, albeit a little critical and apprehensive.
a recognition that war is no longer a conceivable instrument of policy and that for this reason international disputes can be settled only by means of diplomacy" and how they had made all the traditional motivations of war irrelevant. With the assistance of new technologies "each major power can now bring about a tremendous increase in its productive capacity without annexing either foreign territory or foreign labour."59 But the basic dilemma of American defence, was that whereas the enormity and suicidal nature of modern weapons seemed to have made all thoughts of war repugnant, obsolete and irrelevant, America's building of warfighting doctrines and capabilities still could not be slowed or compromised. Firstly, because it would mean "giving the Soviet rulers a blank cheque" and secondly, if the nuclear age had on the one hand made traditional modes of aggression outmoded, various new forms of aggression like "internal subversion, of intervention by volunteers" etc. had taken their place.60 Besides, the experiences of the Korean war also taught Kissinger that America's nuclear capabilities were not useful in fighting 'less than all-out' aggressions as also with smaller powers' blackmail tactics none of which

60. Ibid., pp.7 and 10.
might 'warrant' the use of nuclear weapons. 61

The basic problem of contemporary strategy, therefore, was "how to establish a relationship between a policy of deterrence and a strategy for fighting a war in case deterrence fails." 62 Then asking the question as to whether the doctrine of limited war could fill this gap he starts answering this question by first explaining his understanding of limited war. For him it was different in the nuclear age compared to the traditional limited wars. Traditionally, wars could have been limited for various reasons like, for example, 'the disparity in power between the protagonists'; or when a stronger power was restrained from using its total power for 'moral, political or strategic reasons' or for reasons of 'supply'; or, they could be limited even 'by tacit agreements' between the contestants. But in the presence of nuclear weapons wars are limited only when they are either fought exclusively between 'secondary powers' (say India-Pakistan) or exclusively within one of the two blocks 'which did not warrant outside intervention' (like the Soviet intervention in Hungary 1956) or when intervention by a major power was imminent but did not materialise.

61. Ibid., p.16.
62. Ibid., p.132.
Finally, there are limited wars which could be kept limited despite their being directly fought between major powers. For Kissinger, "If a war between major powers can be kept limited, it is clear that the first three situations would also stand a good chance of being kept from expanding." 63

According to Kissinger the strategy of limited war could not be imposed on any nation: "with modern weapons, a limited war becomes an act of policy, not necessity." 64 Thus the distinguishing feature of limited war was that it was "essentially a political act" and therefore traditional militaristic definitions based on limitations of area or number or type of weapons could no longer apply. He not only discarded the notion that 'policy ends where war begins' but also asserted that the political leadership must assume the responsibility for defining the framework within which the military are to develop their plans and capabilities and thereby emphasised the political element the concept of warfare. He said:

A limited war, by contrast, is fought for specific political objectives which, by their very existence, tend to establish a relationship between the force employed and the goal to be attained. It reflects an attempt to affect the opponents' will, not to crush it.

63. Ibid., p.138.
64. Ibid., p.139.
to make the conditions to be imposed seem more attractive than continued resistance, to strive for specific goals and not for complete annihilation.65

Having established its theoretical necessity Kissinger then moves on to explain the operational advantages of limited war. For him any countering of communist aggressions in the periphery would, apart from appropriate warfighting doctrines and capabilities, involve also the task of "strengthening the will to resist among the peoples threatened by Communist expansionism." And in this context he argued: "Few leaders of threatened territories will wish to rely on protection of our strategic superiority in an all-out war." This would in any case mean suicide by the nation on whose territory this war would be fought. Accordingly, he concluded: "Thus, if we could develop forces capable of conducting limited war and of getting into position rapidly, we should be able to defeat the Soviet Union or China in local engagements despite their interior positions."66 Thus limited war for Kissinger apart from appropriate warfighting doctrine and force structure also essentially required a great deal of "discipline and subtlety of political leadership and the confidence of the society in

65. Ibid., p.140.
66. Ibid, pp.149, 150 and 152.
it," that was necessary to deal with the psychological aspects of limited war. Unlike an all-out war, it did not have any clear outcomes like victory or defeat. Instead it was a continuous interplay of leadership's psychological equations which were highly unstable and were based on a series of intangible variables. The threat of these operations anytime expanding into an all-out war is an important constraining factor.

Kissinger also strongly refuted the argument that building up forces for an all-out war automatically included creation of capability for fighting limited wars. He explained that since the greatest incentive for any aggressor for keeping a war limited was the omnipresence of capabilities for an all-out war in their utmost readiness, any "use of our strategic striking force as a dual-purpose force would weaken the deterrent to all-out war at the precise time, when it should be strongest." For him the characteristics of weapons and the planning of operations differed radically between the forces for an all-out war and those for limited war. For example, in an all-out war the targets are known in advance and troops are continuously trained on

67. Ibid., p.167.
68. Ibid., p.156.
how to inflict maximum destruction in the shortest possible time. But in case of limited war, not only the locale and targets are not known in advance but even the forces are trained, on the contrary, to be highly mobile, flexible and discriminating so as to avoid any unnecessary destruction. Whereas the chief objective in an all-out war is how to eliminate the enemy's retaliatory power before it does much damage, in limited war destruction is applied gradually in relation to limited objectives all the time intending to give necessary incentives to the adversary to negotiate for political compromise and for war termination. Answering the critics of limited war that it did not provide any "inherent guarantee" against expansion, Kissinger replied that limited war can in no way replace options of deterring an all-out war but only intends to "devise a spectrum of capabilities" and therefore is "not an alternative to massive retaliation, but its complement."69 In fact for him the obsession of Americans with total war which made them see war as only an 'aberration' was only a "historical accident", otherwise in history "limited war has been both more frequent and more productive..."70 Similarly, to the objection that limited war was a war of attrition he replied that this was "in fact

69. Ibid., pp.143, 145.
70. Ibid., p.136.
an argument in favour of a strategy of limited war" because for him limited war which was likely to become a war of attrition would "enable us to derive the greatest strategic advantage from our industrial potential... A war of attrition is the one war the Soviet bloc could not win." Thus according to Kissinger "creating readiness for limited war should not be considered a problem of choice but of necessity". It not only strengthened the US position against the communist bloc "by enhancing the credibility of the threat and by increasing the willingness of our leaders to act" but for the future when "the nuclear technology becomes more widely diffused" and as a result "other and perhaps less responsible power will enter into the nuclear race" it will be the only potent instrument to handle "the nations who have less to lose and whose negotiating position might even be improved by threat to commit suicide."72

Herman Kahn:

The restless writing style of Herman Kahn and his unduly complicated, if not bizarre, scenarios clearly defy any concise exposition of his ideas. Compared with other

71. Ibid., p.155.
72. Ibid., pp.172-173.
scholars of limited war he does not appear committed to any particular type of limited war. Yet his writings remain central to any study of limited war because they are unique in discussing operational aspects of limited war in the nuclear age in unprecedented details. However, Kahn is relatively far too clear on the necessity and significance of building appropriate limited war capabilities and doctrines. For instance, according to him:

...even if the United States and the Soviet Union can not wage all-out war against each other this does not mean that the role of force will be entirely eliminated. There will still be many disputes between the two nations - disputes which may tempt one side to use force on a small scale. If the only counter the other nation has is to commit suicide by starting a thermonuclear war that nation will most likely will not act. (sic.) Therefore, one needs limited war capabilities to meet limited provocations.73

And apart from this necessity of keeping the war limited in case it starts, the limited war capability, for Kahn, is also an ideal instrument for enhancing the credibility of deterrence, thereby decreasing the chances of having to resort to war. It was also, for him, an ideal instrument to defend allies thereby enhancing the chances of keeping the alliance united and strong. He writes:

Very few of our allies feel that they could survive a general war—even one fought without the use of Doomsday Machines. Therefore, to the extent that we try to use the threat of a general war to deter the minor provocations, that are almost bound to occur anyway, then no matter how credible we try to make this threat, our allies will eventually find the protection unreliable or disadvantageous to them. If credible the threat is too dangerous to be lived with. If incredible, the lack of credibility will itself make the defense seem unreliable. Therefore, in the long run the West will need "safe looking" limited war forces to handle minor and moderate provocations.  

However, when it comes to recommending the warfighting doctrines for the nuclear age he seems to greatly emphasize the necessity for restraining all wars to only non-nuclear category: "I am more extreme than some proponent of limited war, however, in that I favour having a high-explosive (HE) capability, even though it threatens to be expansive."  

This according to him not only has the advantage of all violations of this rule being unambiguous but particularly suits the great technological and economic superiority of the United States that makes it specially competent to fight this type of wars. Any use of nuclear weapons, which he considered as immoral, insane, hideous and highly unlikely, for him puts great premium on blackmail, surprise and concealment etc. Especially between the two nuclear superpow-

74. Ibid., p.155.
75. Ibid., p.540.
ers any exchange of nuclear weapons scared him: "...as applied to the Soviet Union and the United States, this would be an unprecedented situation and the consequences on the political fronts at home and abroad are entirely unpredictable."76 For him the stalemate between the competing nuclear superpowers was bound to be resolved "either by detente or by one side breaking out of the balance of terror."77 Nonetheless, since Herman Kahn fails to declare nuclear war as an impossibility, he does emphasize the need for finding out the ways to fight, survive and terminate a nuclear war should one start by chance, or by accident or miscalculation.

Kahn visualizes a 'controlled general war' in as many as 44 rungs of his notorious "escalation ladder" in which nuclear weapons are first used at rung fifteen and which describes nearly 30 different stages of keeping even a nuclear conflict limited until finally it slips into a totally uncontrollable and blind "spasm war". However, the central thrust of his descriptions shows him propagating basically a counter-force or no-cities doctrine of limited

war. Time and again he emphasizes that in war a country is always more interested in destroying the adversary's military forces in order to escape destruction rather than in attacking its civilians and industrial targets. Accordingly, he puts great premium on first strike. And here apart from the survivability of nuclear forces, he also lays great emphasis on the survivability of legal decision-making machinery, vital military personnel, enough military command and control centres and finally resolve to carry out wartime operations. 78

A limited war in the nuclear age, for Khan, will primarily be a competition between opposing parties each trying to demonstrate the credibility of its high resolve and to weaken the resolve of the opposing party. In other words a limited war is a blunt method of pressurising one's enemy asking him thereby to choose amongst given options of compromise, a dangerous continuation of crisis and escalation towards an all-out war. But he is confident that in any war involving use of nuclear weapons the first nuclear attacks are most likely to be made only on military structures and only for demonstrative values. He writes: "...the first use of nuclear weapons is likely to be less for the

78. n.76, p.111.
purpose of destroying the other's military forces or handicapping its operations, than for redress, warning, bargaining, punitive, fining or deterrence purposes." 79

Klaus Knorr:

Klaus Knorr who had once been a contributor to William Kaufmann's *Military Policy and National Security* (1956) that had laid the foundations of the limited war debate in the United States is the most important author on limited strategic war. Klaus Knorr was greatly critical of various misconceptions that he found were prevalent in the literature on defence strategy. For instance, for most of the military strategists of 1950s a general war between the two nuclear superpowers was invariably envisioned as sort of uncontrollable all-out armegaddon. Accordingly, the central motive of Klaus Knorr's writings came to be, in his own words, to prove that "the general war might also be 'controlled' strategic war." 80

Right from the beginning Klaus Knorr had a strong belief that "an attack on the US will not snuff out all life

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with one murderous blow; that majority of Americans will in fact survive such an attack and... will rather fight than surrender."81 Accordingly, for him, "Limited Strategic war is a possible war; to fight and prepare for such a war is a possible strategy."82 He was also greatly critical of military-strategists' obsession with over-emphasizing the significance of nuclear threshold in a war and of invariably defining limited nuclear war as a conflict of exclusively tactical nuclear weapons. For him, "If escalation could be controlled because the interest of both antagonists to avoid large scale strategic war is overwhelming.... Why should the restriction of hostilities to non-nuclear weapons be the crucial threshold."83

According to Klaus Knorr the advent of nuclear weapons had truly revolutionised the institution of war and had cast serious doubts on the usability of military power as an instrument of national policy. And for him, as long as nuclear war continues to spell unmitigated mutual destruc-


82. Knorr, Klaus and Thorton Read, Limited Strategic War, n.80, p.6.

tion the arbitrament of war will always remain too costly for practically all rational purposes of state. But this was not the whole truth. As he discovered himself though the utility for military power had apparently decreased in the recent decades yet "this development so far has not progressed to a point at which military power had ceased to be crucial factor in structuring the international relationships." In fact the frequency of military conflicts had reduced only at the high costs of making them far more destructive and unpredictable. And this made it all the more vital for a nation's survival that it be prepared for fighting wars of all the kinds and all the times. It is on this premise only that Klaus Knorr took upon himself the crucial task of examining and understanding the doctrine of limited strategic war. According to him:

"...this war was chiefly defined by two properties. (1) It involves the case of strategic or long range weapons such as bombers and medium- or longer range missiles — although components of tactical forces, such as fighter bombers, might be used for particular missions. (2) It is deliberately and voluntarily limited in the total amount of damage threatened, planned and done, as well as in the targets attacked. Although the attacks might, and in majority of cases would, reduce the opponents military capabilities to varying degrees,

84. Ibid., p.134.

the primary purpose is to act on his will, to make him desist from the military provocation or aggression he has launched. Since the opponent is likely to retaliate, limited strategic war, then, is primarily a contest of resolve.86

This Limited Strategic War, according to Klaus Knorr, was not to be resorted to in solving all kinds of military threats but was to be scrupulously used only in situations where lower rungs of the ladder of violence had failed to contain or deter an aggression and in which accepting defeat was not a possible solution. The doctrine of limited strategic war, for him, did not hold much value for the actual destruction of various countervalue or counterforce targets but sought basically "to demonstrate one's resolve, one's determination not to accept defeat but, if necessary, to broaden and deepen the conflict that has broken out"; or from another angle, it could be aimed at punishing the opponent "to shaken his resolve by the prospects of further punishment." And finally, limited strategic war could also be used "to reduce the enemy's military capabilities," by either strategic attack on interdiction targets or by attacks on bases, warships or on his strategic weapons systems."87 In order to make this doctrine a success, Klaus

86. Knorr, Klaus and Thorton Read, Limited Strategic War, n.80, p.3.
87. Ibid., p.17.
Knorr laid great emphasis on maintaining its credibility which according to him lay in its capability to obtain success both in terms of keeping the war limited and in obtaining a reasonably favourable termination. And this credibility, apart from a nation's technical hardware, political system etc. was based on four determinants that he classified as public attitudes, rational decision-making, command-and-control arrangements and war plans. And above all there was a determinant which according to him could more often prove the greatest constraint in effectively fighting a war; and this was the "differences of national interests" which must be resolved within alliances in order to fight unitedly in all contingencies.

Klaus Knorr also discovered that the spectre of nuclear weapons that had effectively diminished the frequency of nation-states resorting to military conflicts had also generated an altogether new form of war that lay somewhere in between the traditional concepts of international and civil wars. He called it 'sub-limited' warfare. This new revolutionary warfare in which, according to him, money, political organisation, propaganda and the simple arms and morales appropriate to assassination, terrorism, guerrilla

88. Ibid., p.21.
war were more indispensable to success than the sophisticated weaponry fashioned for formal large scale international conflicts was the major emerging challenge to the American defence strategy. And a similar war had already been responsible for frustrating American experience in Vietnam despite the great reach of US military strength. Resort to this new form of war, according to him, was attractive for three basic responses: Firstly, it lacked the escalatory risks of limited nuclear war. Secondly, if it was a strategy that ideally suited nations that lack sophisticated weaponry but have greatly mastered the art of political penetration and was greatly favoured by military underdogs. Finally, as the humankind was passing through a dangerous phase of nuclear weapons this strategy being least violent, appears specially effective in conduct of international relations. Accordingly, he proposed this as another kind of limited war that needed to be examined and appreciated. He in fact believed that if limited strategic warfare was the one that was most dangerous of all, this sub-limited warfare was sure to become the most fashionable and therefore both these categories should be the foremost concern of America's military-strategic community.

89. n.83, pp.144-145.
90. Ibid., p.146.
Morton Halperin:

Morton Halperin defined limited war as "a military encounter in which the Soviet Union and the United States see each other on opposing sides and in which the effort of each falls short of the attempt to use all of its power to destroy the other."91 But according to him, "virtually all the literature on limited war has focused on the possibilities and problems of restraining a local war between East and West..." and have "used terms 'limited war' and 'local war' synonymously" and envisioned the 'central war', where the adversaries fire directly at the homelands of each other, as something of an all-out and uncontrollable conflict.92 Similarly he observed the inadequacy of the term 'escalation' in limited war which according to him could not sufficiently explain the processes of 'explosion' and 'expansion' in a limited war. Accordingly the central thrust of his thesis was to explain how even the central war between the East and the West could also be kept limited and controlled. To elaborate this argument he wrote:

92. Ibid., pp.92 and 2.
Because the United States and the Soviet Union have a capability to destroy very large parts of each other's homelands, they share an interest in restraining their mutual destruction in the event of war. It is sometimes argued that this condition makes war obsolete in the sense that we will never have another major war.... Even for a number of years prior to the atomic age, it has not been in the interest of a major power to go to war in most situations. Though the development of thermonuclear weapons and intercontinental missiles makes the disutility of warfare even clearer, it by no means eliminates the possibility of war.... The existence of thermonuclear weapons and the lack of any mechanism for guaranteeing the absence of war makes it necessary to take seriously the problem of how war, once it erupts, can be kept limited.93

And over the years his research in this area only strengthened this conviction. And this confidence is clearly projected in his *Defence Strategies for the Seventies* which was published nearly a decade later in 1971:

If one recognises that the all-out, uncontrollable use of nuclear weapons by both superpowers would lead to substantial destruction of the population and industry of the two countries, then clearly both sides might attempt to limit a general nuclear war, should one take place. Even a large scale war might be limited in terms of the targets attacked: each side might refrain from bombing the others' major cities and might concentrate instead on military targets. In addition, each side might not use all its strategic forces, holding some in reserve to threaten the destruction of its opponent's cities. However, unlikely such restraints would be in the event of a nuclear war, both the United States and the Soviet Union have taken such possibilities into account in designing their forces.94

93. Ibid., p.2.

Halperin examined the possibilities of limiting a central war under three distinct kinds: First what he calls Limited Retaliation is a strategy that involves a quantitative and qualitative restraint as to targets and a quantitative (not qualitative) restraint on weapons. Second, Counter-city strategy envisions a central war in which little or no quantitative restraint on the use of strategic forces is expected, but which involves qualitative restraint involving attacks only on cities and not on strategic forces. The third, No-cities doctrine is in contradiction to the second category and involves attacks only on strategic forces and not on cities and other civilian targets. He also discusses limited local war but here instead of examining any of prevalent doctrines and theories tries to highlight certain grey areas where because of uncertainties in its policy and theory the United States may be reluctant to act. For instance, the United States may not have any clear cut options in cases of aggressions which are not so total or which take place between forces which are neither of the US allies nor of communist satellites or where the local resistance does come from the communists but they are not under any command or help from the USSR or China and therefore the threats of deterrence may not work or where for

95. n.91, pp.96-97.
various other reasons the US forces may be technically unable to control the situation. In such a scenario of uncertainty he classifies three situations where the threats will be clear and explicit. First is nuclear blackmail where a nuclear superpower may issue an ultimatum for the use of strategic nuclear weapons against a country does not comply with its demands. In the second category he places all military aggressions by the USSR or China with either conventional or tactical nuclear weapons anywhere in the world. In the third category comes the threat or use of violence between any two countries which are allied to the East and the West.96

To the surprise of his contemporaries Halperin did not regard suitability or efficiency of technical capabilities or the perfectness of warfighting doctrines, war plans or force structures as most crucial in effecting limitation in warfare. Instead, for him, it depended much more on the decisions that were taken and the attitudes and perceptions formed prior to the outbreak of war and then further developments during the war. It is in this category that he explains what he calls political-effective objectives - a factor that he regards most crucial in causing both the

96. Ibid., pp.115-116.
limitation as well as expansion or explosion of any limited war. For him neither the United States nor the Soviet Union had any great interest in the small islands of Quemoy or Matsu that lay off the coast of China nor did it really bother them as to what precise parallel divided North and South Korea. It is rather the political implications of losing and gaining that, according to Halperin, remain the primary concern of these superpowers as wars for them are a platform to demonstrate to the world which way the tide is running and to demonstrate their willingness to commit their forces and materials necessary to defend their allies. 97 Though he concedes that often other factors like battleground etc. might have their intrinsic values in war yet, for him, "the political effect objectives of the two sides will still be more important." 98 In fact he proposed it as an ideal yardstick to be applied at the times of uncertainties in America's defence strategies. And for him in limiting any war as also in using such a war as instrument of policy the American administration will always require to balance the political value of increased military success with the costs and risks involved. 99

97. Ibid., pp.5-6.
98. Ibid., p.5.
99. Ibid., p.131.
Thomas Schelling:

Though basically an economist, Schelling has throughout his career been preoccupied with various problems of America's defence strategy, especially with the increasing acceptability of nuclear weapons as weapons of limited war. For him with the widespread developments of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons suitable for use by ground forces with modest equipment and the development of launching rockets for air-to-air combat with pinpoint accuracy "the nuclear weapons have ceased to provide much basis, if any, for creating nuclear weapons as particularly different from other weapons in the conduct of limited war." In fact, for him, this increasing versatility of nuclear weapons was only making the concept of limited war more and more blurred. As he says:

Whether limits on the use of atomic weapons other than the particular limit of no use at all, can be defined in a plausible way is made more dubious, not less so, by the increasing versatile character of atomic weapons.... There seems consequently to be no "natural" break between certain limited use and others.

Keeping within the traditions of limited war which

101. Ibid., p.261.
maintains that all wars to be rational must be essentially a political act and instrument of policy, he tries to build an argument for the non-use of nuclear weapons in a limited war. Firstly, for him, "there are political disadvantages in our using them first."102 Also the doctrines of limited war which base themselves on the arguments that conclude from mere weapon-effect analysis are militaristic and do not go into the processes that actually effect limitation in warfare. Therefore any understanding of limited war without understanding these processes - or as to wherefrom these limits originate in a limited war, what makes them stable or unstable, what gives them authority and what circumstances and modes of behaviour are conducive to the finding of mutual recognition of limits etc. - can only be superficial.

Schelling argued that though there are no longer any physical or technical distinctions left between nuclear and other conventional weapons, yet the distinctions remain and they are psychological, perceptual, legalistic and symbolic and in order to maintain the sanctity of limited war we must build upon them.

Limited war, according to Schelling, has to be viewed in the context of the imminent danger of an all-out nuclear

102. Ibid., p.257.
war which it tries to exploit and which it might ensue. Therefore, the threat of limited war, for Schelling, has two parts: one is the threat to inflict costs directly on the other side in the form of casualties, expenditures, loss of territory, loss of fact etc. And the second is the threat to expose the adversaries to a heightened risk of general war. For him, since the first threat is closely intertwined with the second, any engagement in limited war is bound to heighten the possibilities of a general nuclear war; this makes limited war essentially an exercise in psychological pressure tactics rather than a measure of concrete destruction and it is here only that the threshold of conventional versus nuclear weapons becomes vital. Once this limit is crossed the belligerents are likely to lose their nerve and fail to rationally conduct their game of manoeuvres. But for him the belligerents in the nuclear age are most likely to maintain this limit and it has been ideally illustrated by the non-use of poison gas during the second World War and by the non-use of nuclear weapons in the post-second World War conflicts. Accordingly, Schelling defines limited war as a "mutual acknowledgement of a tacit bargain" wherein the belligerents "may be

103. Ibid., p.259.
willing to accept limited defeat rather than take the initia-
itive in breaching the rules." 104 It is very risky to break
these rules as there is no guarantee that in the chaotic
scenario of ongoing war any new ones may be found and recog-
nised in time to check the fate of mutual annihilation.
Limited war depends on mutual recognition of limits and it
is very difficult to develop and sustain such limits in the
uncertainties and distrust that precedes and stays through-
out war. And crossing the threshold of atomic weapons is
according to Schelling is most important of all limits in a
limited war. He says:

...the principal inhibition on the use of atomic weapons in limited war may disappear with their first use. It is difficult to imagine that the tacit agreement that nuclear weapons are different would be as powerfully present on the occasion of the text limited war after they had already been used in one. We can, probably not, therefore, ignore the distinction and use nuclears in a particular war where their use might be of advantage to us and subsequently rely on the distinction in the hope that we and the enemy might both abstain. One potential limit of war will be substantially discredited for all times...."105

He continued to propagate against the use of nuclear
weapons. He believed that in case nuclear weapons were once
used in a limited war the sensed danger of its expansion and
explosion will increase strikingly and these may far tran-

104. Ibid., p.264.
105. Ibid., p.266.
sient the actual accomplishments of their use on the battle-
field. Therefore, he asserts, "we usually think of deter-
rence as having failed if a major war ever occurs. And so
it has; but it could fail worse if not efforts were made to
extend deterrence into war itself." Limited war, there-
fore, is only the active part of deterrence that tries to
demonstrate one's resolve and to establish that the passive
threats were effective and strong. Accordingly, the objec-
tive was not the actual destruction but of convincing the
adversary on the futility of waging or escalating war. For
Schelling therefore

the analogy for limited war... is not a trip-wire that
certainly detonates an all-out war if it is in working
order and altogether fails if it is not. We have
something more like a minefield, with the explosives
hidden at random; a mine may or may not blow up if
somebody starts to traverse the field.107

Thus, the non-use of nuclear weapons, a tacit agreement
of belligerents, and the political control of military
operations are the three important pillars of Schelling's
conception of limited war. And for him this limited war, by
which he essentially means limited conventional war, will
continue to be the most effective form of war, because he

106. Schelling, Thomas C., Arms and Influence, (New Haven:
107. Ibid., p.106.
believes that despite divergence of interests among the existing nation-states there remains a powerful common interest. And this gives him confidence that war will, most probably, continue to play its traditional role of being an instrument of policy even in the nuclear age.

Ian Clark:

The prolific writings of Ian Clark have, unlike others, been primarily an attempt at bringing out various limited war doctrines from the hitherto fashionable close-door parleys of war planners and other technicalities and jargons of strategic thinkers and at giving them a broader meaning as an integral concept of international relations and political philosophy. According to Clark, the fundamental problem involved in any discussion on the possibilities of limitation in warfare must be "whether, in principle, warfare is an activity that makes sense to limit?" or whether this "involves a basic contradiction, an undermining of war's very purpose." For him no cruel and unrestrained acts of violence can be sustained as an essential element of warfare and this occurs only when war gets degen-


erated and then it becomes something else not war. War, for him, does not entail termination of all rules, conventions and constraints that govern the peacetime international relations. As he says:

...a nuclear exchange involving possibly some 250 million prompt deaths any closer to the concept of war? This is pointless slaughter, and pointless slaughter is not what we understand war to be. If we must have war then it should be war, not slaughter, and we can move in this direction only by accepting intrinsic limits as a necessary part of war....110

Apart from studying war under Clausewitz's famous notion of war being a political instrument of state policy, Ian Clark also examines war from other two important angles, to what he calls pathological and cataclysmic conceptions.111 Here whereas the former regards war as a disease to society and believes that it can be cured the latter believes that war just like other natural calamities cannot be wished away from human lives and all we can do is to make efforts to mitigate the magnitude of destruction caused by war. Therefore, for both these schools of thought limitation in warfare does not appear as if a contradiction

110. Ibid., p.244.

of terms, instead limitation appears to be an integral part of any war worth being called a war. And for Ian Clark the advent of nuclear age has in no way made these basic conceptions of war redundant or obsolete and this at best has only succeeded in throwing new challenges to strategic thinkers and perhaps to certain degree also in "modifying our conceptions of war and our ideas about the political uses of violence."

The idea of limited war, according to Ian Clark, is in no way unique to the advent of nuclear weapons as the element of limitation is integral to the very conception of war. But what he finds equally startling about the nuclear age is that in no previous age had so much of intellectual effort been ever devoted to what is called the 'deliberate hobbling' of one's existing military power as has been done in the nuclear age. Placing the same argument in broader perspective he writes:

What has primarily contributed to the emergence of a self-conscious body of writing about the subject of limited war in the post-1945 period has been the realization that war has lost most of its pre-existing "natural" and "political" limitations.

112. Ibid., p.152.

But he finds that most of these writings have unduly entangled themselves into the complex technicalities of microscopic issues and have failed to generate any universal concensus on limitation in warfare. Accordingly, he exhorts his contemporaries to build a general political theory of limitation in warfare:

...since the war would not be limited by natural friction nor by political context, it was perceived as all the more necessary if it was to return to some semblence of political purpose, that the political artifice take up where nature had left off; if once limited war had been the free gift of nature, it had now to be the fruit of conscious political choice.114

For Ian Clark, there is an almost emergent need for building an explicit political theory of limited war and he finds it manifestly absent from the recent strategic theorising.115 He then narrates five important political conditions that today highlight the significance and necessity of pursuing limited war in the nuclear age.116 Firstly, refuting the scholars who view themselves to be living in post-deterrence nuclear world and are preoccupied with building

114. Ibid., p.58.
newer 'warfighting' doctrines, Ian Clark asserts that limited war must essentially and primarily be viewed as an instrument of enhancing credibility of deterrence. As the other option of massive retaliation has lost credibility because of the adversaries having a similar capacity, limited war has been proposed as another form of deterrence. Secondly, as no forms of deterrence are infallible and war is likely to break out, limited war is the only sensible mechanism that can help in keeping destruction limited and in seeking war's termination in the most favourable circumstances. Thirdly, highlighting the diversities of different strategic cultures and intellectual perceptions, Ian Clark finds it highly dangerous to continue pursuing war-avoidance policies if they were not responded to in good faith by the adversaries. Here limited war, for him, ideally suits the requirements of building a second option of nuclear warfighting. Fourthly, limited war is also an ideal doctrine that can help belligerents fight and win nuclear conflicts or at least avoid losing one such conflict. And finally, limited war, especially its counterforce doctrine is also desirable as this is the only concept that is most in keeping with traditional conceptions of just war.

For Clark, the most important point is not merely limited war per se but whether limited war is to be compared with a nuclear holocaust or with the existing nuclear stale-
There is very reason to believe that limited war would be preferable to an all-out war and simultaneously that a no-war situation is preferable to a limited war, which is likely in any case to go out of hand. And, how these circles are to be squared are the basic problem of the philosophical analysis of limited war.

Others:

Then, of course, there are others whose efforts may not have been exclusively confined to examining and theorising on different aspects of limited war yet whose writings make an indispensable contribution to clarifying and elucidating certain issues of the debate on limited war.

General Maxwell D. Taylor made an important contribution in the field of nuclear strategy. His practical experience was his main asset: he was Commander of the 8th Army in the Korean War (1950) and was the US Ambassador in Vietnam during initial years of US involvement in the Vietnam War.

Learning from his experience, he was among the first

117. Clark, n.108, p.204.
118. Ibid., p.243.
the critics of Massive Retaliation to propose a positive alternative strategy of flexible response; his practical experiences during the United States' two important wars had confirmed his belief that Massive Retaliation was no longer an answer for these new kinds of local aggressions. In his own words the primary motive behind his taking a plunge into the business of writing was "to expose the Great Fallacy that Massive Retaliation is an all-whether, all-purpose strategy which is adequate to cope with any military challenge." 119 Another related fallacy which he wanted to expose was the belief that preparations for a general war were of supreme importance and that they also automatically included capability to fight less than all-out or smaller conflicts. For Taylor preparation for limited war had to be separate and it was important that at the same time readiness for an all-out war also remain at its peak. In case of limited war he laid great emphasis on improving the strategic mobility of the limited war forces. 120 Like most of other writers on limited war, Maxwell Taylor was also strongly inclined towards keeping limited war conventional but cautioned that such limitation must not be observed at the cost of compromising national interests. He wrote:


120. Ibid., p.151.
The question of using atomic weapons in limited wars would be met by accepting the fact that primary dependence must be placed on conventional weapons while retaining readiness to use tactical atomic weapons in the comparatively rare cases where their use would be to our national interest.121

James King was another great critic of Massive Retaliation who had tried to highlight the significance of the nuclear threshold in the successful execution of limited war. As early as in January 1957 in an article in Foreign Affairs he had argued that the United States must not initiate the use of nuclear weapons. He had suggested that given nuclear parity, tactical use of nuclear weapons was no longer to the advantage of the United States. He had also stressed the difficulties of keeping a nuclear war limited and the political costs of initiating the use of nuclear weapons.122 According to him the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons is "sharp, clear and convincing", and therefore, "a general nuclear war is implicit in any employment of nuclear weapons. Their non-employment", for him, "is the most obvious of all possible limitations."123

121. Ibid., p.146.
123. King, James, "Limited War", Army, August 1957, p.87.
However, critics of Massive Retaliation were not the only people to propose for limited war. There were also those who essentially believed in building warfighting doctrines and arguments came particularly from the members of scientific community and defence forces. For instance, great nuclear scientist Edward Teller believed that the use of limited nuclear war would be of great advantage to the United States. Similarly wrote Colonel Robert Robertson in March 1959 - at the peak of anti-Massive Retaliation campaign - that America could survive a limited nuclear war: "It would be possible to live through a major nuclear war and even to re-establish a national economy and society."124

In this regard some of the scholars have even tried to build their conceptions of limited war by putting together all the major elements of limited war on which a general consensus exists. But thereby they have made these conceptions unduly vague and unprecise. William O'Brien, for example, tried to provide us with a broad based 'working definition of 'limited war'.125 According to him this definition is meant to lay down parameters for discussions and


understanding of the concept of limited war. His definition is basically a collection of salient features of various theories and doctrines of limited war; among these he includes:

1. Political primacy and control over military in structure;
2. Limited objectives;
3. Economy of force; proportionality of means; limited objectives;
4. Voluntary, self-imposed rules of conflict, the most prominent of which are —
   a) Communication between belligerants and the development of explicit and implicit rules of conflict,
   b) Avoidance of direct superpower confrontation,
   c) No nuclear weapons or tactical and/or theatre nuclear weapons only,
   d) Geographical confinement of conflict,
   e) Invocation of claims that the conflict is legally permissible and collectivization of war,
   f) Limited mobilization,
   g) Restraint in the use of the psychological instruments,
   h) Fight and negotiate strategies,
   i) Introduction of third-party mediators and inspectors; involvement of international organisations,

5. Flexible response based on a broad spectrum of capabilities and will to avoid escalation.
Another broad based definition is given by Steven T. Ross. "Limited war", for him,

"represents a precise controlled utilization of force, a force carefully sculpted to accomplish with reasonable precision a clearly defined political objectives... an orchestration of force and policy to produce positive results at a minimum cost of blood and treasure."126

It is within this broader theoretical framework that respective US administrations had shaped their specific defence postures and doctrines of limited war. And, in fact, on various occasions many of these writers were themselves directly involved in the enunciation of many of US limited war doctrines.