
FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

accidental, unauthorized, third country or terrorist attacks." But the primary reason for Washington's pursuit of its Strategic Defense Initiative, says Holm, is "to achieve technological parity [with the Soviets] in BMD weapons." The arms negotiators in Geneva know that SDI threatens an area where "the Soviet advantage was clear-cut."

The Case for Public Archives

"Expanding the Data Base" by John Lewis Gaddis, in *International Security* (Summer 1987), Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Political leaders, former secretary of state Henry Kissinger once said, rarely "gain in profundity while they gain experience." Rather, he added, the convictions formed prior to entering public service are "the intellectual capital they will consume as long as they continue in office."

Gaddis, a historian at Ohio University, finds that situation unfortunate. National security matters are too important to have "so little communication taking place between those who devote their careers to studying them and those who temporarily have the constitutional responsibility for actually dealing with them."

Politicians, notes Gaddis, are too busy to read academic journals, especially since political scientists tend to write in "incomprehensible dialects." Straining to make their studies "scientific," they often describe world events in inexact, jargon-laden prose. On the other hand, many historians—"hunters and gatherers" of facts—end up "collecting pebbles on the beach, and arranging them in patterns that may delight the eye but that rarely stimulate the brain."

Political scientists, historians, and policymakers, Gaddis argues, should take greater advantage of the nation's archives. Such records make possible very detailed analyses of recent American history. For instance, owing to archival research, historians now believe that all governments tend to draw back from considering the use of nuclear weapons in limited wars—such as in Korea or Vietnam—fearing that a military failure would undermine the future credibility of the nuclear deterrent. And contrary to popular opinion, no U.S. administration during the early Cold War years actually believed there was an "international communist monolith."

"John Foster Dulles himself," says Gaddis, "not only differentiated between varieties of communism abroad but, as early as 1953, was devising sophisticated strategies for promoting conflicts between them."

Gaddis says Washington should set up a computerized archival data base. Some National Security Council and State Department records, documents pertaining to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War, and declassified papers from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Central Intelligence Agency, are open to the public, but not always easily accessible.

The notion of a computerized archive is not new, Gaddis notes. More than a dozen U.S. allies—including Great Britain, Australia, France, Japan, the Netherlands, and West Germany—already keep open files. He chides historians and political scientists for not making better use of the existing materials to inject "new ideas" into the field of security studies.