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On assessing timing

STRATEGIC WARNING: THE PROBLEM OF TIMING[1]

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A widely held concept about warning is that, as the hour of the enemy attack draws near, there will be more and better evidence that enemy action is both probable and imminent. From this, the idea follows naturally that intelligence will be better able to provide warning in the short term and will, in the few hours or at most days prior to the attack, issue its most definitive and positive warning judgments. Moreover—since there is presumed to be accumulating evidence that the enemy is engaged in his last-minute preparations for the attack—this concept holds that intelligence will likely be able to estimate the approximate if not the exact time of the attack. Therefore, if we can judge at all that the attack is probable, we can also tell when it is coming.

This concept of warning—as a judgment of imminence of attack—has strongly influenced US thinking on the subject for years. As of this writing, the official definition of strategic warning in the JCS Dictionary is, "A notification that enemy-initiated hostilities may be imminent." More explicitly, the US national warning estimate of 1966 concluded: "Intelligence is not likely to give warning of *probable* Soviet intent to attack until a few hours before the attack, if at all. Warning of increased Soviet readiness, implying a *possible* intent to attack, might be given somewhat earlier."

However logical these suppositions may appear in theory, they are not supported either by the history of warfare nor the experience of warning analysts, and in recent years more realistic assessments of this problem have begun to appear in warning papers and estimates.

For the fact is that warning judgments are not necessarily more accurate or positive in the short term and that assessing the timing of attack is often the most elusive, difficult and uncertain problem which we have to face. It is simply not true that the last few days or hours

[1] This article is adapted from a chapter of *A Handbook of Warning Intelligence* which the author is preparing for the training of intelligence personnel in analytical problems of strategic warning.

prior to the initiation of hostilities are likely to bring more and more specific indications of impending attack which will permit a better or more confident judgment that attack is likely or imminent. In many cases experience shows that the reverse will be true, and that there will be fewer indications that the attack is coming and even an apparent lull in enemy preparations. This can be quite deceptive, even for those who know from experience not to relax their vigilance in such circumstances. Those who do not understand this principle are likely to be totally surprised by the timing—or even the occurrence—of the enemy action. They will probably feel aggrieved that their collection has failed them and they will tend to believe that the remedy for the intelligence "failure" is to speed up the collection and reporting process, not appreciating that the earlier collection and analysis were more important and that a judgment of probability of attack could have been reached much earlier and should not have been dependent on highly uncertain and last-minute collection breakthroughs.

Principal Factors in the Timing of Attacks and the Attainment of Surprise

Nearly all nations, except in unfavorable or unusual circumstances, have shown themselves able to achieve tactical surprise in warfare. History is replete with instances in which the adversary was caught unawares by the timing, strength or location of the attack—even when the attack itself had been expected or considered a likelihood. Even democracies, with their notoriously lax security in comparison with closed societies, have often had striking success in concealing the details (including the timing) of their operations. To cite the most conspicuous example, the greatest military operation in history achieved tactical surprise even though it was fully expected by an enemy who potentially had hours of tactical warning that the massive invasion force was approaching. It was the Normandy invasion, in which deception played a major role in misleading the Germans.

It is not only by deception, however, that tactical surprise is so often achieved and that last-minute preparations for the attack can be concealed. A more important and more usual reason is that the indications of attack which are most obvious and discernible to us are the major deployments of forces and large-scale logistic preparations which are often begun weeks or even months before the attack itself. Once these are completed, or nearly so, the enemy will have attained a capability for attack more or less at the time of his choosing, and the additional preparations which must be accomplished shortly

prior to the attack are much less likely to be discernible to us or may be ambiguous in nature. Staff conferences, inspections, the issuance of basic loads of ammunition and other supplies, and the final orders for the attack all are measures which require little overt activity and are not likely to be detected in time except by extraordinarily fine collection and rapid reporting—such as a well-placed agent in the enemy's headquarters with access to some rapid means of communications, or the fortuitous arrival of a knowledgeable defector. Even the final deployments of major ground force units to jumpoff positions for the assault may be successfully concealed by the measures which most nations take to insure tactical surprise—including rigid communications security and night movements. Thus, unlike the major deployments of troops and equipment which almost never can be entirely concealed, the short-term preparations have a good chance of being concealed, and quite often are. And, even if detected, there will often be minimal time in which to alert or redeploy forces for the now imminent attack, still less to issue warning judgments at the national level. Such tactical warning usually is an operational problem for the commander. Ten minutes or even three hours warning does not allow much time for the political leadership to come to new decisions and implement them.

Another facet of the problem of assessing the timing of attack is the difficulty of determining when the enemy's preparations are in fact completed, and when he himself will judge that his military forces are ready. It will often be particularly difficult to make this judgment with regard to logistic preparations. In fact, I can recall no instance in my experience in which it could be clearly determined that the logistic preparations for attack were complete, particularly since heavy supply movements usually continue uninterrupted even after the attack is launched. There has often been a tendency for intelligence to believe that all military preparations are completed earlier than in fact is the case—the discrepancy usually being attributable to the fact that the major and most obvious troop deployments had apparently been completed. Thus, even when intelligence has come to the right judgment on enemy intentions, it has sometimes been too early in its assessment of the possible timing of the attack.

In addition, the enemy command for various reasons may not go through with an attack as soon as the forces are fully prepared, or may change the date of the attack even after it has been set. A recent study has compiled some data concerning the frequency with which D-Days are not met, and the effects of this on the adversary's judgments. Of 162 cases analyzed where D-Days applied, almost half

(about 44 per cent) were delayed, about five per cent went ahead of schedule, and only slightly more than half (about 51 per cent) remained on schedule. The most common reasons for delay were weather and administrative problems, presumably in completing or synchronizing all preparations. Some attacks have had to be postponed repeatedly. For example, the Germans' Verdun offensive of 21 February 1916 was postponed no less than nine times by unfavorable weather.[2]

Such changes in plans have sometimes had notable effects on the opponent's assessments, particularly when he has gone through one or more alerts of impending attack which failed to materialize. Whaley notes that the finding that procrastination can help to generate surprise is explainable by the "cry-wolf" syndrome—whereby the false alert, and particularly a series of them, breeds skepticism or downright disbelief of the authentic warning when it is in fact received. "Moreover, the trend is that the greater the number of false alerts, the greater the chance of their being associated with surprise.... [The] Aesopian moral seemingly holds . . ., the false alarms serving mainly to undermine the credibility of the source and dull the effect of subsequent warnings. ... It is ironic that ... some of the D-Day warnings were quite authentic, the enemy having merely unexpectedly deferred the operation. The consequence was, of course, that several superb intelligence sources including Colonel Oster, Sorge and Rossler received undeserved black marks on the eve of their subsequent definitive alerts." [3]

Of all aspects of operational planning, the easiest to change and most flexible is probably timing. Once troops are in position to go, orders to attack usually need be issued no more than a few hours ahead, and the postponement of even major operations rarely presents great difficulties to the commander. Attacks have been postponed—or advanced—simply because there was reason to believe that the enemy had learned of the scheduled date. Obviously, among the simplest of deception ruses is the planting of false information concerning the date of operations with the enemy's intelligence services.

In addition to general preparedness, tactical factors and surprise, operations may be delayed for doctrinal reasons or to induce enemy forces to extend their lines of communication or to walk into entrapments in which they can be surrounded and annihilated. The delayed counteroffensive, designed to suck enemy forces into untenable advanced positions, is a tactic which the Communists have employed

[2] Barton Whaley, *Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Center for International Studies, April 1969), pp. 177-78, and A-69.

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 187–188.

with devastating effect. Obviously, misjudgments of the enemy's intentions in such cases have been heavily influenced by the seeming delay in his response, which induces a false sense of security that he will not respond at all.

Political factors also may weigh heavily or even decisively in the timing of operations. This, of course, will be particularly true when (as is often the case) the nation in question intends to resort to military operations only as a last resort and hopes that the threat of such action will induce the opponent to capitulate. Obviously, in such cases, the decision of the national leadership that the political options have run out and that only force will succeed will be the determining factor in when the military operation is launched. In this event, operations may be deferred for weeks beyond the date when military preparations are completed, and the assessment of the timing of the attack may be almost exclusively dependent on knowledge of the political situation and insight into the enemy's decision-making process.

Still another political variant which may affect the timing of attack is when one nation is attempting to induce the other to strike the first major blow and thus appear as the aggressor. In this case, a series of harassments, border violations and various clandestine tactics may be employed as the conflict gradually escalates until one or the other power decides to make an overt attack. Clearly, the point at which this may happen will be very difficult to predict.

Apart from the various reasons noted above, there may be other largely tactical considerations which will affect the timing of attack. Weather, as already mentioned, is one of these—not only visibility, but in some cases winds, tides, moonlight or lack of it. Conditions of roads and terrain of course have been a major determining factor in when some operations will be launched. Military operations and logistic movements of Communist forces in Southeast Asia have traditionally been greatly slowed, if not halted altogether, at the height of the rainy season, and spring thaws on the plains of central Europe have delayed many operations. In cases where weather effectively precludes overland movement, it is of course highly probable that attacks will not occur. Nonetheless, there is always a chance that an enemy may choose to attack even in highly adverse conditions in the interests of achieving surprise.

As is well known, many attacks are initiated near dawn, for two reasons: the nighttime cloaks the final deployments of the attacking units, and the hours of daylight are desirable to pursue the operation. Several Communist nations, however, have shown a marked

favoritism for attacks in the dead of night. This has been particularly true of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces, which have shown themselves highly adept in night penetration operations and assaults. The USSR also has often launched attacks or other operations hours before dawn: the operation to crush the Hungarian revolt began between about midnight and 0330; the Berlin sector borders were sealed about 0300; the invasion of Czechoslovakia began shortly before midnight.

The USSR also has shown some favoritism for Sunday, both the Hungarian and Berlin operations having occurred in the early hours of a Sunday morning. It would be dangerous, however, to assume that this would be the case. The invasion of Czechoslovakia occurred, for instance, on a Tuesday night, slightly to the surprise of some who had come to expect Soviet operations to begin on Sundays. Whaley has found some preference for Sunday operations among Communist states but not in a majority of cases; it was true in only about one-fourth of the operations which he studied.[4] Among other nations, there does not appear to be any evident preference for particular days of the week. In cases where Sunday is chosen, it is not for any anti-religious reason, but because the alert status of most Western nations is then usually lowest. The Japanese selected Sunday for the Pearl Harbor attack because their observations had shown that most US ships would then normally be in port.

Some Examples of Problems in Assessing Timing

Because of space limitations, discussion of more than a few examples is precluded, and even these must be covered briefly. There is considerable military historical writing, particularly on World War II, which may be consulted by those who wish to study this aspect in more detail, as well as the many examples in Whaley's previously cited work. Since much of this material is readily available, the examples below include only two from World War II with the remainder drawn from more recent intelligence experience.

The German Attack on Holland, Belgium and France, May 1940

World War II had been under way for eight months before Hitler finally launched his offensive against Western Europe in May 1940, the long delay in the opening of the western front having generated the phrase "phony war." All three victims of the final assault had ample and repeated warnings, and indeed it was the redundancy of

[4] Whaley, *op cit*, pp. 180–181.

warnings which in large part induced the reluctance to accept the final warnings when they were received. The "cry-wolf" phenomenon has rarely been more clearly demonstrated—Hitler is said to have postponed the attack on the West 29 times, often at the last minute.

Owing to their access to one of the best-placed intelligence sources of modern times, the Dutch had been correctly informed of nearly every one of these plans to attack them, from the first date selected by Hitler, 12 November 1939, to the last, 10 May 1940. Their source was Colonel Hans Oster, the Deputy Chief of German Counterintelligence, who regularly apprised the Dutch Military Attache in Berlin of Hitler's plans—and of their postponements. Although in the end Oster provided one week's warning of the 10 May date, and there was much other evidence as well that the German attack was probably imminent, the Dutch ignored the warnings and failed even to alert their forces prior to the German attack. The Belgians, more heedful of the numerous warnings received, did place their forces on a general alert. The French, having also experienced several false alarms of a German attack, seem to have ignored the repeated warnings of their own intelligence in early May, including a firm advisory on 9 May that the attack would occur the following day. These instances also illustrate two fundamental precepts of indications intelligence: "more facts" and first-rate sources do not necessarily produce "more warning," and intelligence warnings are useless unless some action is taken on them.

The Soviet Attack on Japanese Forces, August 1945

This is one of the lesser studied World War II examples, but clearly shows the difference between strategic and tactical warning. The Japanese watched the buildup of Soviet forces in the Far East for about seven months (December 1944 through July 1945). They correctly judged that the USSR would attack the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria, and they were able by July to conclude, also correctly, that the status of Soviet military preparations indicated that the USSR would be ready to attack at any time after 1 August. Despite this expectation which almost certainly must have resulted in a high degree of alert of the Japanese forces in Manchuria, the Kwantung Army had no immediate warning of the timing of the attack, which occurred about midnight on the night of 8–9 August.

The North Korean Attack on South Korea, June 1950

This was a notable example of both strategic and tactical surprise, and indeed one of the few operations of this century which truly may

be described as a surprise attack. Neither US intelligence, at least in its official publications, nor policy and command levels had expected the attack to occur, as a result of which there had been no military preparations for it. The South Koreans, despite many previously expressed fears of such an attack, also were not prepared and had not alerted their forces. Since strategic warning had been lacking, the short-term final preparations of the North Korean forces (insofar as they were detected) were misinterpreted as "exercises" rather than bona fide combat deployments. In considerable part, the warning failure was attributable to inadequate collection on North Korea—but the failure to have allocated more collection effort in turn was due primarily to the disbelief that the attack would occur. In addition, the "cry-wolf" phenomenon had in part inured the community—for at least a year, there had been about one report per month alleging that North Korea would attack on such-and-such a date. When another was received for June, it was given no more credence than the previous ones—nor, in view of the uncertain reliability and sourcing of all these reports, was there any reason that it should have been given greater weight. Although we can never know, most and perhaps all of these reports may have been planted by the North Korean or Soviet intelligence services in the first place. The attack is a notable example of the importance of correct prior assessments of the likelihood of attack if the short-term tactical intelligence is to be correctly interpreted.

Chinese Intervention in the Korean War, October–November 1950

Among the several problems in judging Chinese intentions in the late summer and fall of 1950 was the question of the timing of their intervention. Based on the premise that the less territory one gives up to the enemy, the less one's own forces will have to recover, the Chinese can be said to have intervened much "too late" in the conflict. And this conception of the optimum time for Chinese intervention strongly influenced US judgments of their intentions. From the time the first direct political warning of the Chinese intention to intervene was issued on 3 October (to the Indian Ambassador in Peking) until the first contact with Chinese forces in Korea on 26 October, all Communist resistance in Korea was rapidly collapsing as the US/UN forces were driving toward the Yalu. As the Chinese failed to react and the Communist prospects for recouping their losses appeared increasingly unfavorable, the Washington intelligence community (and probably the Far East Command as well) became increasingly convinced that the time for effective Communist intervention had passed. In the

week prior to the first contact with Chinese forces, the US national warning committee (then known as the Joint Intelligence Indications Committee, the predecessor of the Watch Committee) actually went on record as stating that there was an increasing probability that a decision *against* overt intervention had been taken.

Once the Chinese forces had actually been engaged, there was an interval of a month before they became militarily effective and launched their massive attacks in late November. Thus in this period the intelligence process again was confronted with the problem of assessing the timing of any future Chinese operations, as well of course as their scope. The four-week period produced many hard indications, both military and political, that the Chinese in fact were preparing for major military action. But there was virtually no available evidence when such action might be launched, and even those who believed that the coming offensive was a high probability were somewhat perplexed by the delay and were unable to adduce any conclusive indications of when the attack would occur. As is well known, tactical surprise was indeed achieved.

Even in retrospect, we cannot be sure whether the Chinese delayed their intervention and their subsequent offensive because of political indecision, the need for more time to complete their military preparations, or as a tactical device to entrap as many UN forces as possible near the Yalu. I believe that military rather than political factors probably delayed the initial intervention and that both preparedness and tactical considerations accounted for the delay in the offensive, but I cannot prove it. Others may argue—and they cannot be proved wrong—that the Chinese may not have decided inevitably on intervention by 3 October, and/or that negotiations with the USSR and North Korea may have delayed the intervention as much as military factors.

The Arab-Israeli Six-Day War, June 1967

There were many indications of the coming of this conflict. From 22 May, when Nasser closed the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, tensions had been mounting, and the possibility of war was universally recognized. Both sides had mobilized and taken numerous other military preparedness measures. Before 1 June US intelligence was on record that Israel was capable of and ready to launch a preemptive and successful attack with little or no warning, and that there was no indication that the UAR was planning to take the military initiative. The US predictions of the likelihood and probable success of an Israeli

assault were highly accurate, although the precise timing and tactics of the operation, of course, were not known to us.[5]

The Israelis nonetheless achieved almost total tactical surprise against the Arabs in their attacks on the morning of 5 June, particularly in the decisively effective air strikes. The Israelis screened their plans by a combination of rigid security (there was no leak of their decisions or final military preparations) and an exceptionally well-planned and effective deception campaign. There were several facets of the deception plan, one of which was to lead Egypt to believe that the attack, if it occurred, would be in the southern Sinai rather than the north. In addition, numerous measures were taken in the several days prior to the attack to create the impression that attack was not imminent. These included public statements by newly appointed Defense Minister Moshe Dayan that Israel would rely on diplomacy for the present, the issuance of leave to several thousand Israeli soldiers over the weekend of 3–4 June, public announcements that concurrent Israeli cabinet meetings were concerned only with routine matters, and so forth. In addition, the attack was planned for an hour of the morning when most Egyptian officials would be on their way to work and when the chief of the Egyptian Air Force usually took his daily morning flight.[6]

The Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 20–21 August 1968

This case well demonstrates the impact on intelligence assessments of the seeming deferral of a military operation beyond the date when the forces appear to be ready, and when the intelligence community is psychologically most ready to accept the likelihood of such action. As will be recalled, the major deployments of the Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces for the invasion had largely been completed by 1 August, and it was at this time that US intelligence reached its firmest judgments—i.e., that Soviet forces were in a high state of readiness to invade if it was deemed necessary. When the Soviet Union did not invade in early August but instead reached a tenuous political agreement with Czechoslovakia, a letdown occurred and intelligence assessments almost immediately began placing less stress on the Soviet capability to invade. In fact, that capability was being maintained

[5] See J. L. Freshwater, "Policy and Intelligence: The Arab-Israeli War," *Studies in Intelligence*, Winter 1969, for a discussion of the assessments made by the US intelligence community prior to the outbreak of this conflict.

[6] A great deal of material on the Israeli planning has been brought to light, much of it unclassified. An excellent, unclassified summary of the techniques of deception and tactical surprise has been prepared by the Syracuse University Research Corporation, Syracuse, New York.

and actually was increasing. Logistic activity was continuing at a high level—the USSR did not announce until 10 August the conclusion of its so-called rear services "exercise" which served as the cover story for the mobilization and forward deployment of the invasion forces. Moreover, substantial additional forces from the Baltic and Belorussian Military Districts were continuing to deploy into Poland in the first half of August. So long as this buildup continued, or was being maintained, the possibility of course was in no way reduced that the USSR sooner or later would exercise its military capability. Nonetheless, the psychological peak of our readiness for the invasion had passed well before it occurred. Since there was very little last-minute warning (such indications as there were mostly reached us too late), the USSR achieved effective tactical surprise against both the Czechoslovaks and ourselves.

The Czechoslovak case provides an outstanding illustration of the critical importance for warning of the judgment of probability of attack and of the lesser likelihood that intelligence will be able to assess the timing or imminence of attack. US intelligence in this instance, as in others, placed too great weight on short-term or tactical warning, and too little on the excellent strategic intelligence which it already had. Moreover, many persons (including some at the policy level who were aggrieved that they had not been more specifically warned) tended to place the blame on the collection system which in fact had performed outstandingly in reporting a truly impressive amount of military and political evidence, much of it of high quality and validity, bearing on the Soviet intention. The intelligence community, while clearly reporting the USSR's capability to invade, deferred a judgment of whether or not it would invade in seeming expectation that some more specific or unequivocal evidence would be received if invasion was imminent. On the basis of historical precedent and the experience derived from numerous warning problems, this was a doubtful expectation; an invasion remained a grave danger, if not probable, so long as the military deployments were maintained, while the timing was far less predictable. The history of warfare, and of warning, demonstrates that tactical evidence of impending attack is dubious at best, that we cannot have confidence that we will receive such evidence, and that judgments of the probable course of enemy action must be made prior to this or it may be too late to make them at all.

North Vietnamese Attacks in Laos and South Vietnam, 1969–70, 1971–72

As a final example of problems in timing, three instances of North Vietnamese attacks in Laos and South Vietnam provide quite striking

evidence of the problems of assessing timing of attacks even when the preparatory steps are quite evident and firm judgments of probable attack have been made.

Traditionally, in the seesaw war in northern Laos, the Laotian government forces have made gains in the Plaine des Jarres area during the rainy season, and the Communist forces (almost entirely North Vietnamese invaders) have launched offensives during the dry season (November to May) to regain most of the lost territory and sometimes more. In the fall of 1969, evidence began to be received unusually early of North Vietnamese troop movements toward the Plaine des Jarres, including major elements of a division which had not previously been committed in the area. As a result, the US Watch Report beginning the first week of October unequivocally forecast a major Communist counteroffensive. After eight consecutive weeks of this conclusion (qualified in later weeks by the proviso "when the Communists have solved their logistic problems"), it was decided to drop it—not because it was considered wrong, but because consumers were beginning to question repeated forecasts of an enemy offensive which had not materialized yet, and the impact of the warning was beginning to fade. In mid-January, evidence began to become available that preparations for an attack were being intensified, and a forecast of an impending major offensive was renewed. The long-expected offensive finally came off in mid-February, or four months after the troop buildup and the initial prediction of the attacks. The delay was not a surprise to experienced students of the area, who had learned that the North Vietnamese meticulously plan and rehearse in detail each offensive operation and that their attacks almost always were slow in coming.

Two years later in the fall of 1971, a very similar repetition of the North Vietnamese buildup in northern Laos began, again in October and again involving the same division, although this time there were indications (such as the introduction of heavy artillery) that an even stronger military effort would be made. Intelligence assessments again forecast major North Vietnamese attacks in the Plaine des Jarres but for the most part avoided any firm judgment that they were necessarily imminent. There was almost no tactical warning of the attacks which this time were launched in mid-December in unprecedented strength and intensity. Within a few days, all Laotian government forces were driven from the Plaine, and within three weeks thereafter, the North Vietnamese launched an offensive against government bases southwest of the Plaine.

Concurrently, the North Vietnamese were preparing for their major offensive against South Vietnam which finally kicked off on 30 March 1972 after months of buildup and intelligence and public predictions that an offensive was coming. Initial expectations, however, had been that the attacks most likely would come some time after mid-February, possibly to coincide with President Nixon's visit to China later that month. Once again, timing proved one of the most uncertain aspects of the offensive, and we remain uncertain whether Hanoi originally intended to launch the attacks earlier and was unable to meet its schedule, or never intended the operation to come off until the end of March. In retrospect, it appears that the forecasts of another "Tet offensive" in mid-February probably were somewhat premature, since the deployments of main force units and other preparations continued through March. Nonetheless, the intelligence forecasts were essentially right, and it could have been dangerous on the basis of the evidence available in mid-February to suggest that the attacks would not come off for another six weeks.

Growing Recognition that Warning is Not a Forecast of Imminence

It is from experiences like these (which are truly representative and not selected as unusual cases) that veteran warning analysts have become extremely chary of forecasting the timing of attacks. They have learned from repeated instances, in some of which the timing of operations appeared quite a simple or obvious problem, that this was not the case. In most instances, attacks have come later and sometimes much later than one might have expected, but even this cannot be depended on—sometimes they have come sooner. But except in rare cases any forecast of the precise timing of attack carries a high probability of being wrong. There are just too many unpredictable factors—military and political—which may influence the enemy's decision on the timing and a multitude of ways in which he may deceive you when he has decided.

This experience has finally borne fruit at the national estimative level. The last estimate to address possible warning of Soviet attack in Europe reversed the previous estimate (cited on the first page of this article) that warning of probable attack could not be given until a few hours before. It concluded instead that, once deployments and other military preparations had been largely completed, the chance of obtaining evidence of further military preparations would be greatly reduced, and that final warning that attack was imminent could likely be dependent largely on chance or other unpredictable factors.

For strategic warning, the key problem is not when attack may occur, but whether the enemy is preparing to attack at all—a judgment which we have a good and sometimes excellent chance of making with accuracy. Judgments often can be made, with less confidence in most cases, that all necessary preparations have probably been completed. A little less confidence still should be placed in forecasts as to when in the future all necessary preparations may be completed. At the bottom, and least reliable of all, will be the prediction of when the adversary may plan to strike.

Strategic warning is not a forecast of imminent attack. *Strategic warning is a forecast of probable attack* and it is this above all which the policy official and commander need to know. If we recognize the uncertainties of timing, we will also be less likely to relax our vigilance or alerts because the enemy has not yet attacked even though he is seemingly ready.