

through flexible response is widely seen as appropriate in the present strategic environment. To be effective, deterrence requires that a potential aggressor be convinced that the costs of aggression will outweigh the gains. The advantage of NATO's strategy of flexible response is that adversaries are deterred both by uncertainty about the severity of an initial response to aggression, and by the possible escalation to an increasingly destructive response. Thus, should a massive Soviet conventional attack not be stopped by conventional forces, NATO could reply with tactical nuclear weapons, and if necessary with strategic nuclear weapons.

NATO's deterrence strategy has been criticized from a variety of perspectives. One major critique suggests that peace-seeking democracies should renounce a first-use nuclear option; while a second and more pragmatically oriented critique argues that due to the high cost of conventional forces, NATO should rely solely on nuclear retaliation as a less expensive defence alternative. Both of these suggestions are flawed. Relying solely on a massive nuclear response is no longer credible in an era of reciprocal nuclear vulnerability; nor would it permit a more measured response to other limited forms of aggression, for example minor military attacks, or political and economic threats. The former view, that NATO should renounce a first use of nuclear weapons, is also inappropriate, for in the face of a successful conventional Warsaw Pact attack, NATO would be precluded from escalating its response. The logic of this strategy demands that NATO maintain and deploy much more powerful and expensive conventional forces, sufficient to prevent a Soviet victory in a conventional European war. If this objective were attained, it might then prove possible for NATO to adopt a no-first use posture. Proponents of this policy should therefore be strong supporters of a major increase in NATO and Canadian conventional military capabilities.