

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons,
1946-1976

Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Nuclear Question

The United States and Nuclear Weapons, 1946–1976

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons,
1946-1976

Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

***To Samuel Weiss and in memory of Eva Weiss
and Samuel and Lena Mandelbaum – my grandparents***

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons,
1946-1976

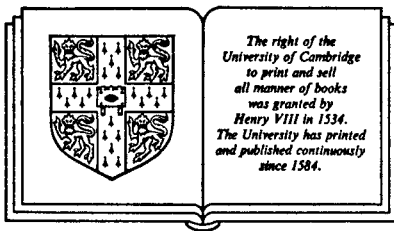
Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons, 1946–1976

MICHAEL MANDELBAUM



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

LONDON NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons,
1946-1976

Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521296144

© Cambridge University Press 1979

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1979

Reprinted 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 (twice), 1984, 1985

Re-issued in this digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Mandelbaum, Michael.

The nuclear question

1. United States – Military policy.
2. Atomic weapons. I. Title.

UA23.M277 358'.39 79-388

ISBN 978-0-521-22681-3 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-29614-4 paperback

Written under the auspices of the Center for International Affairs and the Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons,
1946-1976

Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

Preface	vii
1 The nuclear question	1
The bomb and the international system	1
The three questions of strategy	8
The two schools of diplomacy	12
Two prophets	18
2 The failure of liberal diplomacy	23
The Baruch Plan	23
The nuclear diplomacy of the 1950s	27
The search for a “first step”	33
3 The origins of strategy	41
From Hiroshima to the nuclear age	41
The “New Look” of 1953	46
Strategic revisionism	54
The strategic debate	60
4 The foundations of stable deterrence	69
The Kennedy administration	69
A “survivable” striking force	74
Weapons procurement and bureaucratic “friction”	78
“Flexible response” and beyond	90
5 The rise and fall of nuclear war	99
Tactical nuclear weapons	99
The counterforce doctrine	106
Ballistic missile defense	113
Civil defense	119
“We are all dead. . .”	124
6 The great fright: The Cuban missile crisis	129
The crisis	129
The nuclear shadow	134

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons,
1946-1976

Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi	Contents
Gunpoint diplomacy	144
The crisis in perspective	154
7 The first step: The Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963	159
Nuclear diplomacy before the missile crisis	159
The politics of a test ban	167
The Moscow negotiations	175
The Senate ratification	179
8 Fencers on a tightrope	191
Nuclear diplomacy, 1963–76	191
Nuclear strategy, 1963–76	201
Soviet nuclear strategy and diplomacy	209
Fencers on a tightrope	217
Notes	225
Index	274

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons,
1946-1976

Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

This book is a history of American nuclear weapons policy. Little of what has been written about nuclear weapons is historical. Most of those who have concerned themselves with the problems that these armaments have raised since 1945 have, understandably, been more interested in the question “What is to be done?” than in asking what has happened, and why.

The Nuclear Question is intended to be more than merely a chronology. I offer several arguments about the development of American policy, drawn from the history of international politics and from what many still consider the greatest book on international conflict – Clausewitz’s *On War*.

A secondary purpose of the book is to trace the similarities and differences between international politics before and after the coming of nuclear weapons, a task that I take up at greater length in a forthcoming volume.

I believe that technology and politics have combined to create what has been called a nuclear weapons “regime”: “a system of international obligations (formal accords, tacit commitments, and informal understandings), and doctrines (when, where, why, how and which nuclear weapons ought to be used) that together govern the role of nuclear weapons in war, peace, and diplomacy,”¹ and that this regime constitutes the feasible obligations, force structures, and doctrines most likely to keep the nuclear peace. In this sense *The Nuclear Question* is the story of the evolution of the best of all possible nuclear worlds, although it is also the story of the failure to bring about the best of all imaginable nuclear worlds.

¹ David C. Gompert, “Approaching the Nuclear Future,” in Gompert et al., *Nuclear Weapons and World Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977), p.6.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons, 1946-1976

Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

I hope that this book will be of interest to those who do not take part in debates about nuclear policy, and who do not feel at home in discussions of throw-weights, cruise missiles, and MIRVs. A kind of allergy to anything connected with nuclear weapons is not uncommon, even among people who follow politics and international affairs attentively. Such an allergy may be founded on the conviction that the doctrines and concepts of nuclear strategy and arms control lie beyond the power of ordinary people to comprehend. This is not so. By describing the origins and development of these concepts and doctrines, I hope to contribute to reducing this allergy.

The book is also written for the specialists who follow the technical developments and the political responses to them that make up the politics of nuclear weapons. I have drawn upon the declassified archival material and the Oral History collection of the John F. Kennedy Library. But most of what is significant for my purposes appears in the public record. By no means all the information on American nuclear weapons policy is yet available. I am confident, however, that when it is, the general picture that I have drawn will not have to be altered significantly.

A word is in order about the book's historical span. Why end in 1976? From a practical viewpoint, a thirty-year span carries the account through the life of the most recent Republican presidency, and the presidential term is a useful way to divide the history of postwar American foreign policy. But the date 1976 is in some respects arbitrary. The SALT II negotiations began before 1976 and continued afterward. Bringing the account to a close in 1976, however, is in keeping with the book's argument that the main lines of nuclear weapons policy were laid down between 1961 and 1963. The following 13 years, as I argue in Chapter VIII, confirmed what the Kennedy administration had established, both deliberately and inadvertently. This remains true in the most recent years as well.

Initially President Carter tried to chart a new course for nuclear weapons policy. He proclaimed the goal of ridding the world entirely of nuclear weapons, and in April 1977 submitted a SALT proposal to the Soviet Union that differed mar-

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons,
1946-1976

Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

ix

kedly from those previously considered. He was soon forced back to the patterns his predecessors had followed, however, by the Soviet refusal to accept his new proposals.

Like everyone who writes on these matters, I do so in part because I do not want the bombs to go off. Like everybody else, I do not know whether, or when, or between which countries the next nuclear war will be fought. The task of keeping the nuclear peace is, alas, neither simple, nor easy, nor the province of a single nation. I have written *The Nuclear Question*, however, on the presumption that this task is one to which an account of three decades of American nuclear weapons policy can contribute.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the debts that I have incurred in writing this book.

I have received help of various kinds from Edward K. Hamilton, Robert Jervis, William W. Kaufmann, Carl Kaysen, Anne Hebard Mandelbaum, David G. Mandelbaum, Gary R. Orren, David Riesman, Michael Schaffer, Edward Skloot, John Steinbruner, Strobe Talbott, Daniel Yergin, and especially from Stanley Hoffmann.

Three research centers generously provided office space, useful libraries, and congenial environments in which to think and write. I am grateful to the Center for International Affairs of Harvard University, and its Director, Raymond Vernon; to the Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard, and its Director, Paul Doty; and to the Research Institute on International Change at Columbia University, and its Director, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Acting Director, Seweryn Bialer. I spent part of a year on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship in the Humanities largely devoted to other matters working on the book.

The staff of the John F. Kennedy Library, and especially Sylvie Turner, Ann Travis, and Susan Landy, were exceedingly diligent in locating materials there for me.

Barbara Brennecke, Pamela Squires, Barbara Falgoust Williams, Martha Ockenfels, Kenji Gleason, and Eva Morvay typed the manuscript, in its various incarnations, with skill and dispatch.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-29614-4 - The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons,
1946-1976

Michael Mandelbaum

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

Preface

When I first began to read books like this, I noticed that the author frequently included a special, fulsome tribute to his wife, and wondered why. Now I know.

MICHAEL MANDELBAUM