

The Dialogue on Security and Arms Control

The Necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy by Henry A. Kissinger. Harper & Brothers. 370 pp. \$5.50.

by Ernest W. Lefever

"Our margin of survival has narrowed dangerously," says Henry Kissinger. "But we still do have a margin. The possibility of choice remains. . . . We can still shape our future." With this affirmation Kissinger sets the tone of his book, which is urgent without being apocalyptic, somber without being hopeless.

Can America rise to the challenge of the crisis? Only if we "give up our illusions. We are not omnipotent. We are no longer invulnerable. The easy remedies have all been thought of. We must be prepared to face complexity. Above all, we must not delude ourselves about the gravity of our position." Such self-delusion comes easily to Americans who find it difficult to comprehend the "possibility of tragedy."

Kissinger speaks as a pragmatic and morally concerned realist. This intellectual wrestling merits the attention of thoughtful citizens here and in Europe. The heart of his book, really a collection of eight largely self-contained essays, is addressed to the security dilemma. Its real merit rests upon his rigorous analysis of defense, deterrence and arms control.

This reviewer is concerned primarily with Kissinger's contribution to the increasingly thoughtful dialogue in this country on arms and arms control. Perhaps the first thing to be said is that Kis-

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singer clearly falls within the currently prevailing strategic consensus, represented in the scholarly community by men like Bernard Brodie, James E. King, Herman Kahn, W. W. Kaufman, Thomas C. Schelling and Albert Wohlstetter, and represented in the new administration by Paul Nitze (Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs), Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and the President himself. This book is a systematic and thoughtful reflection of the consensus which Kissinger himself helped to create.

The author asserts that the United States and the free world are grossly unprepared to deter or to fight either limited wars or a general nuclear war. "The basic difficulty is that recent budgetary levels have caused *every* mission to be neglected." Given the will and the courage to face the security dilemma, what can the United States do to make nuclear war less likely without inviting further Soviet expansion by the use or threat of military might?

Kissinger's answer might be summarized in these words. In our dangerous world we face four major risks of general war—war by surprise attack, war by "escalation," "catalytic" war, and war by accident. There are certain things we can and must do to reduce each of these risks.

Surprise attack by the Soviet Union against us can most effectively be deterred by making such an attack unprofitable. Our best way to achieve this is to develop a "second strike" force capable of visiting "unacceptable damage" upon the Soviet Union. To do this our "second strike" capacity must be invulnerable, i. e., it must survive a first strike against us. The "first goal of any military policy" is to make our forces "invulnerable." If each side has invulnerable forces we have a high degree of military stability, a condi-

tion of mutual deterrence through a "balance of terror." But with a galloping technology this uneasy balance can be upset and a would-be aggressor might be tempted to exploit a transitory advantage. So every effort should be made to maintain the balance, hopefully at progressively lower levels of potential violence.

But what is "unacceptable damage"? What kind of second strike capacity is politically effective and morally justifiable? Around these questions rages one of the hottest moral-political-strategic debates in the Pentagon today. The advocates of a "counterforce" strategy are pitted against the proponents of a "finite deterrent" strategy. A counterforce capacity, says Kissinger, "requires a retaliatory force so large and so well protected that it can guarantee the destruction of the opponent's offensive power." Some Air Force spokesmen favor this strategy. Advocates of the "finite deterrent" school, on the other hand, maintain that we can effectively deter a strike against us by a much smaller strategic force, with only sufficient capacity to destroy the adversary's major population centers. The word "finite" hardly seems morally consistent with "city busting," but the fact is that a "finite deterrent" strategy requires a much smaller number of missiles than a "counterforce" strategy which is based upon the capacity to destroy military targets and industrial complexes as well as cities.

This fateful debate on strategic doctrine has been going on since 1949 and the end is not yet. Kissinger's chapter on "The Dilemmas of Deterrence" provides a very helpful background for understanding the sometimes cryptic newspaper reports on "targeting" and related strategic problems. This far-reaching dialogue is fraught with moral, military and political complexities and it is not

surprising that it has stimulated a serious reconsideration of the relevance of the just war theory for the nuclear missile age.

War by "escalation" of a limited conflict into nuclear dimensions is probably a greater danger than war by premeditated attack. As long as we manage to keep a nuclear balance at the strategic level, the Communists may attempt to achieve limited political objectives by limited war. In the ensuing conflict one side might be tempted to use tactical nuclear weapons which in turn may force their use by the other side. What started as a local war may escalate into a full-scale nuclear war. The best way to reduce this risk is to have the capacity to throw back a limited attack by conventional weapons. And it is precisely in the area of limited war capacity that the United States is least prepared. The capacity for best throwing back a local attack provides the best posture for deterring such an attack.

A "catalytic" war is a general nuclear war involving the United States and the Soviet Union set off by a third nation having some nuclear capacity. Such a war is one possible consequence of the proliferation of nuclear weapons beyond the present nuclear club. This is known as the "Nth country problem," sometimes expressed in these terms: "Suppose Nasser had an H-bomb!" Kissinger believes with Fred Charles Ikle that the obvious risks accompanying the spread of nuclear weapons are "often exaggerated." Both Kissinger and Ikle favor a negotiated agreement, with adequate inspection procedures, among the nuclear powers to slow or arrest the spread of nuclear weapons technology.

An accidental war, due to technical or human failure, is a possibility, although not as great a danger as some people believe. In addition to the many political-military and technical safeguards we have already set up unilaterally, we could decrease this risk

still further by a negotiated agreement with the Soviets to verify accidents. For example, in "the extremely unlikely event that one of our bombers crashed on a training mission and its hydrogen bomb exploded, it would be vital to have some means to convince the Soviet leaders rapidly that a genuine accident occurred. . . . This suggests that the West and the Communist countries may have a common interest in setting up a control system which will enable them to exchange and verify information, particularly in periods of crisis."

In seeking to mitigate the risks of nuclear war, Kissinger emphasizes the validity of two major approaches for the U. S. Government—unilateral steps which we can take without any agreement with anyone, and formal negotiated agreement with the Soviet Union. These two approaches should be pursued simultaneously. Our Government has been doing this, and the new administration has intensified both efforts.

Under the category of unilateral action we should take measures designed to stabilize the strategic military balance by enhancing the invulnerability of our deterrent force. We do this by increasing mobility (building more Polaris and Minuteman missiles), by strengthening our capacity for an airborne alert for our SAC planes, and by shielding our bomber and missile bases with concrete. We can reduce the danger of escalation by strengthening our conventional military capacity.

At the same time we should continue to negotiate with the Soviets to control and limit arms by formal treaty. We have been negotiating with the Soviets for fifteen years, and we have reached no agreement. The chief barrier has been the unwillingness of the Soviets to agree to what we believe to be a reasonable inspection system. Although the prospect for crashing the inspection barrier is not bright, Kissinger insists that we should not only con-

tinue working on this problem, but should assign more resources to it.

"No aspect of American policy," says Kissinger, "has received less systematic attention than arms control. . . . As a result our Government has found it difficult to achieve agreement about desirable goals and . . . to develop a dynamic program. Before there can be successful negotiation on arms control we must get our intellectual house in order." President Kennedy is attempting to do just that.

The problem of developing a technically feasible inspection system, politically and psychologically acceptable to the Soviet Union, is incredibly difficult and complex. Kissinger devotes considerable attention to this central problem so little understood by the layman, especially as it relates to the current Geneva negotiations on the banning of nuclear weapons tests.

The author properly warns against confusing the primary purpose of arms control ("to enhance the security of *all* parties") with "collateral benefits" such as lowering taxes or diverting resources to economic developments. Foreign aid must be judged on its own merits. The United States has ample resources to do what needs to be done for its security *and* for economic development abroad. Further, it is not at all certain that an arms control agreement will cut down our defense expenditures, especially in the early years. "Inspection is expensive. Additional funds for research are essential. A recasting of our military establishment will almost surely have to accompany arms control." All this costs money, but if it helps to buy peace it is the best bargain of the century.

The Necessity for Choice is a valuable contribution to an understanding of the problems and prospects of security in the nuclear age. It should be widely read and studied.

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