



A review

of B. H. Liddell Hart's

1960 book:

Deterrent

By John F. Kennedy

❖ NO EXPERT ON MILITARY AFFAIRS HAS BETTER EARNED the right to respectful attention than B. H. Liddell Hart. For two generations he has brought to the problems of war and peace a rare combination of professional competence and imaginative insight. His predictions and his warnings have often proved correct.

In his *Deterrent or Defense* (Praeger, \$4.95) he examines the military position of the West, and he offers his prescription. The book weaves together three essays which Capt Hart wrote in 1952, 1954, and 1956. They have a remarkable consistency and retain validity and freshness in 1960.

The central problem we face is clear enough. The Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons and the means for their delivery anywhere on the face of the planet now makes certain that a nuclear war would be a war of mutual devastation. The notion that the Free World can be protected simply by the threat of "massive retaliation" is no longer tenable.

On the "New Look" Policy

On these grounds Capt Hart attacks the Eisenhower Administration's New Look policy and quotes Richard Nixon as saying: "We have adopted a new principle. Rather than let the Communists nibble us to death all over the world in little wars, we will rely in the future on massive mobile retaliatory powers." Hart adds, as his opinion: "Any further threats or proposals along the 'Nixon line' would be the surest way to break up the Atlantic Alliance and open the gates to Communism."

The grand theme of Hart's book comes to this: the West must be prepared to face down Communist aggression, short of nuclear war, by conventional forces. He advocates an expansion of such forces under NATO command, an increase in the mobility of conventional forces to deal with conflicts outside Europe, and the creation of a United Nations standby force of about 20,000 men including reserves.

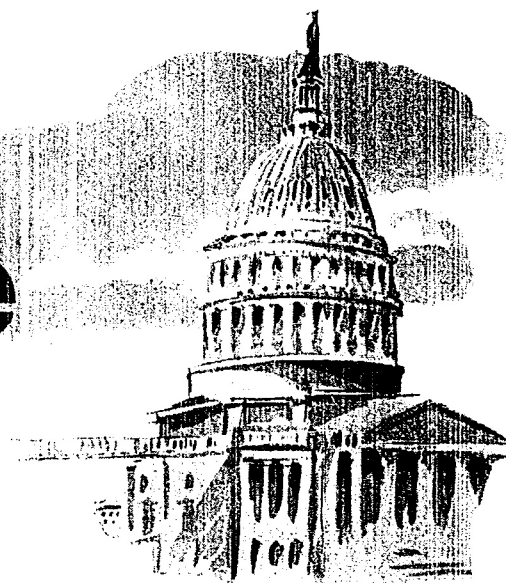
Behind this theme is a judgment: that responsible leaders in the West will not and should not deal with limited aggression by unlimited weapons whose use could only be mutually suicidal. This has, of course, also been the theme of books in this country by responsible military leaders such as Generals Gavin and Taylor.

I share Capt Hart's judgment; and, whatever our military theories have been, since 1945 we have, in fact, dealt with limited aggression by limited means—from the Berlin airlift to the defense of Quemoy and Matsu. But I would put our problem in a somewhat different way. I believe the central task of American and Western military policy is to make all forms of Communist aggression irrational and unattractive. From this basis of strength, I believe we must press on with more vigor—and a greater sense of hope than Hart would allow—to seek in negotiation with the Russians effective means of arms control.

Hart—like many Europeans—underestimates the American task of maintaining the security and effectiveness of the American nuclear deterrent. We face a real

Four chapters appeared originally in the Gazette and here's a timely sequel written by the President last year while serving in the Senate

or Defense



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problem over the next several years in guaranteeing that our deterrent is safe from sudden attack and capable of effective penetration of Soviet defenses. We have no right to tempt Soviet planners and political leaders with the possibility of catching our aircraft and unprotected missiles on the ground, in a gigantic Pearl Harbor. This is our first defense problem.

Second, we must bring into being as fast as our resources permit the new generation of mobile missiles, notably Polaris and Minuteman. We need these missiles not merely to provide an untargetable Free World deterrent, but also for a more constructive reason. The relative security from attack which the new mobile missiles allow should diminish the need for hair-trigger decisions and should give the United States, and the world as a whole, a greater degree of stability.

Expansion of NATO

Third, as Hart makes very clear indeed, we must think through afresh the military mission of NATO. Gen Norstad desires to see his force expanded modestly to 30 divisions. The purpose of this expansion is not to fight a conventional war in Europe. It is to provide a persuasive deterrent to the Russian temptation to seek a limited advance in Europe, on the assumption that the West's only protection is a nuclear attack the West would not use. Here we should note a point Hart emphasizes repeatedly: the European members of NATO have a larger population than Russia. He concludes: "It makes no sense that the NATO countries should

continue to live in mortal fear of a nation inferior in population and material resources, and remain impaled on the horns of a defeat or suicide dilemma."

Hart believes the course of wisdom might be for the European nations to abandon atomic weapons and concentrate on conventional forces, leaving to the United States the task of deterring Soviet atomic strength. There is some basis for this view; and, in any case, the bulk of the job of deterring Soviet nuclear capabilities must continue to be with the United States. It is more likely, however, that the European nations will prefer another solution. Our partners may wish to create a NATO deterrent, supplementary to our own, under a NATO nuclear treaty. Unless the Russians agree very soon to an effective arms control system, with adequate inspection provisions, nuclear knowledge and weapons will spread. This inevitable trend must be effectively and responsibly organized. It would be uneconomic and unwise for each of our partners to build a wholly independent nuclear system. We need arrangements which would permit the rich scientific talents and rapidly expanding economic resources of Western Europe to contribute to the deterrence of nuclear war, without increasing the instability of the military position and without wasting European resources in the futile efforts of each nation to create its own nuclear weapons and delivery capabilities. Each of these objectives must be kept in mind in a new approach to the organization of NATO.

Fourth, as I have repeatedly proposed, we should take

steps to give greater mobility—by air and by sea—to our conventional forces in the Army and Marines. The purpose of such steps is not to fight unlimited wars but to remove the temptation to Moscow and Peking now represented by their immobility. Our troops dribbled into Lebanon in 1958 over a period of several weeks in a manner that would have been extremely dangerous if hostilities had occurred.

NATO and Mobility

Fifth, United Nations forces must be ready for instant movement. Our experiences in the Middle East and, more recently in the Congo underline the importance of such a force and its mobility.

The creation of this range of deterrents cannot be, simply, the avoidance of war. It must exist to provide a stable and secure base for the active pursuit of an arms control agreement.

Hart discusses the question of arms control in his final chapter, entitled "The Most Hopeful Road to Peace." Although his discussion is incomplete, the chapter should be widely read; for he emphasizes some of the real difficulties we confront, notably because of the pace of technological change in weapons and the possibilities of concealment from inspection.

Those, like myself, who believe a much greater effort should be made to create proposals for arms control and to place them in negotiation have a duty to make clear that the task is extraordinarily difficult and technically complex. There are no easy paths out of the arms race in which we—and all humanity—are caught up; and the sober counsel of men like Hart should be heeded. On the other hand, we must try.

The design of an arms control system is as complex a task as the design of a military system. It must be approached with all the professional skills we can command: technological, military, and diplomatic. And these skills must be unified in the Executive Branch under the President's direction. If we are to achieve effective arms control, it will not come about in a romantic moment of human redemption. It will come about because we have carefully designed new forms of controlled military systems and methods of mutual inspection; and because we have persuaded the Russians that it is in their interest as well as ours to accept them and to make them work.

Arms Control Depends on US Strength

Is it likely that we can persuade the Russians to enter into an effective arms control agreement?

They are not going to take arms control negotiations seriously if they calculate the United States may be vulnerable to a surprise attack during the gap period.

They are not going to take arms control negotiations seriously unless they are convinced that we shall soon have an invulnerable, mobile deterrent.

They are not going to take arms control negotiations seriously unless they know they face a Free World which has the unity, the will, and the resources to deal with limited aggression and with nuclear blackmail.

They are not going to take arms control negotiations seriously unless the United States presents to them careful, detailed and well-staffed proposals which evidently

have the full backing of the President, the Executive Branch, and the Congress.

They are not going to take arms control negotiations seriously if they are enjoying success in penetrating Free Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America by a mixture of nuclear blackmail, economic penetration, and ideological attraction.

The United States and the Free World have a long agenda of common action if we are to create the conditions for a serious negotiation of an arms control agreement. But if we fulfill these conditions, I am not without hope. That hope is based on two solid facts.

First, the march of modern science and technology is presenting the Russians and ourselves with an apparently endless flow of new possibilities for mutual destruction. Now missiles; soon, perhaps, extremely expensive forms of missile defense; before long further possibilities for mutual destruction by the military exploitation of space. So long as the arms race goes on, each side is under unrelenting pressure to exploit these possibilities for fear of the disadvantage that would result if the other side got ahead. But sober, human common sense argues—and will steadily argue—that a means be found to call a halt.

Second, the knowledge of nuclear weapons is spreading and it will continue to spread. The instabilities that might result from this diffusion of nuclear weapons are equally dangerous to Russian and to American interests. They raise the possibility of a nuclear war triggered by some third party.

Reason for Hope

No cheap optimism is justified on the basis of these facts. But there is an area of overlapping interest between Russians and Americans. It is the duty of American statesmen to exploit that overlap.

In following this course, we should bear in mind a few impressive lines of advice from Hart's book: "Keep strong, if possible. In any case, keep cool. Have unlimited patience. Never corner an opponent, and always assist him to save face. Put yourself in his shoes—so as to see things through his eyes. Avoid self-righteousness like the devil—nothing is so self-blinding."

I have faith that the human race can make its way through the treacherous mine field represented by the arms race in weapons of mass destruction. If it is to do so, however, American political leaders must not mistake slogans and discourtesy for strength; and Russian political leaders would be well advised to avoid the same error.

The Russian leaders must understand that we are men who are committed in every fiber of our being not merely to protect our nation but also to struggle for the cause of freedom on the world scene; that we are not men who can be pressed, by blackmail or by force, to accept the transfer of territories and peoples to Communist rule.

In the 1960s it is our work, not our rhetoric, which constitutes the real test of our survival. In this age a responsible course includes equally a strengthening of the Free World's defense and new, purposeful efforts to bring the weapons of mass destruction under effective international control. This is the real strategy of peace.

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