Concept Of Total Victory Obsolete

By DEAN JAMISON

It is the purpose of this discussion to examine the balance of military power and analyze some strategic conclusions that this balance implies.

In addition to his extremely unfavorable tactical situation, Khrushchev was probably influenced from further indiscretion in Cuba by the United States overwhelming strategic superiority. On a first strike we could probably destroy most of the Soviet Union's retaliatory capability. Even after absorbing a Soviet strike, the United States would have the capability to place thousands of megaton range weapons on Soviet targets.

WHAT ARE the weapon systems which give us this tremendous power? What is the strategy which demands it? What are the implications of this strategy and what alternatives are being posed?

Within six months or so the United States will have operational upwards of a thousand intercontinental missiles. We have 12 Polaris submarines carrying 192 intermediate range missiles and plan to build 29 more.

OUR STRATEGIC Air Command has 1700 bombers, about 500 of which will be phased out in the next few months. Most of these bombers, though, will remain for some time extremely potent weapons. A B-52 flying low and armed with air to surface missiles is practically invulnerable and is capable of obliterating 8 or 10 Soviet cities on a single mission. In addition to the above long range forces we possess over 2000 fighter-bomber aircraft on the periphery of the Soviet Union capable of carrying megaton weapons.

The “missile gap” has been relegated to myth status. Intelligence estimates in September 1961 indicates that the Soviet Union had but 3.5% of the number of ICBM’s which December 1959 estimates had accredited them. How many missiles this represents was not disclosed but estimates have run from 35 to 75. Their “Long Range Air Armies” probably do not have more than 300 aircraft (20% of the December '59 estimates).

THE SOVIETS are probably strongest in their intermediate range missiles which appear to be of high quality. Newspapers credit them with 300 to 500 of these weapons. Clearly we have an overwhelming strategic superiority. We plan to keep it.

Says Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric, “... we will have twice the striking power by 1965 that we have at the end of 1962.”

The above considerations indicate that the Soviet Union has adopted a “finite deterrence” policy and the United States has adopted a “counterforce” policy. The basis of finite deterrence is the idea that if, no matter how hard you have been hit, you retain the ability to destroy sizable percentage of the enemy’s cities, you will deter him from surprise attack. Lesser forms of aggression (or resistance) are to be met by lesser force levels. Hence the large and well-trained army of the Soviet Union.

KENNEDY’S counterforce policy is, in some sense, a successor to the Eisenhower-Dulles policy of massive retaliation. It holds that by being able to fight and “win” a central war we will be able to deter meso-scale levels of aggression. To meet smaller scale aggression Kennedy has increased the size of the army to a million men and has, recently, ordered a 400% increase in our “counter-insurgency” capability.

To ascertain how useful a counterforce policy is vis-a-vis one of limited deterrence, let’s examine its effectiveness in the following four situations.

(1) DETERRENCE of all-out nuclear attack on the United States or Western Europe. Here (Continued on Page 10)
the value of counterforce is marginal. The major deterring factor is the certainty that we will destroy a large percentage of the Soviet Union’s wealth and population, if we are attacked. There will clearly be more deterrent if we are capable of “winning” the war, but the amount is more likely to be small.

(2) DETERRENCE of major non-nuclear provocation, such as an all-out conventional attack on Western Europe. In “The Uncertain Trumpet” Gen. M. D. Taylor argues that NATO could defend Europe against such an attack by conventional methods or with the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Counterforce, again, adds a marginal deterrence.

(3) DETERRENCE of limited war. The best deterrent to limited wars is to plan far enough into the future to be able to avoid them. Granted the impossibility of that, the next best way to deter them is to be able to fight effectively and win them. Clearly this does not involve the use of intercontinental delivery systems and megaton weapons.

(4) A SITUATION in which the U. S. plans to strike first (i.e., “preventive” war or preemptive war). A counterforce capability is clearly essential in this case. In order to minimize the effects of the enemy’s surviving forces extensive active and passive (civil) defense capabili-