

opinion/editorial

Nuclear holocaust possible

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We live in the ubiquitous shadow of nuclear holocaust. The United States and the Soviet Union maintain immense arsenals of thermonuclear weapons—capable of unimaginable destruction—counterpoised in a state of constant readiness.

mark rupert

A diplomatic blunder could, in the space of 30 minutes, result in our mutual annihilation and the radioactive contamination of much of the earth. It is of paramount importance that our government manage its strategic power wisely, but the official strategic policy of the government, as it has been defined for nearly a decade, imperils the lives of all Americans, as well as hundreds of millions of others worldwide. President Carter has decided to intensify this dangerous policy.

This policy, known as "flexible strategic options," undermines the condition of mutual deterrence that has maintained nuclear peace since 1945.

Deterrence exists when neither superpower can be confident of its ability to disarm its rival with a nuclear first strike. When the strategic forces of each nation can survive a first strike in sufficient numbers to inflict devastating retaliation upon the attacker—when each possesses a "second strike capability"—neither can hope to gain advantage through nuclear attack and both are thereby deterred.

A full-scale nuclear exchange would mean the end of each as a functioning 20th century society. This reciprocal hostage relationship is called mutual assured destruction (MAD), and serves as the basis of deterrence. The sheer horror of this nuclear specter makes its actualization less likely.

Assured destruction and the "balance of terror" were accepted as U.S. strategic policy until the early 1970s when critics arose in the Nixon administration. Should deterrence fail, they argued, MAD would result in the complete devastation of both societies due to its emphasis on the targeting of the industrial and population centers (countervalue targeting).

Moreover, its critics alleged that MAD was not a credible deterrent against limited strikes on military targets (counterforce strikes). Such limited strikes, they feared, would leave American leaders a choice between massive retaliation and consequent annihilation, and asking no response at all. For these reasons, Defense Secretary James

Schlesinger began in 1973 to implement a shift in U.S. strategy toward a policy of "flexible options."

'Flexible options' dangerous

The conversion of American doctrine and force structures to complement the policy of "flexible strategic actions" has been an evolutionary process. Originating during the Nixon years, the process was continued by President Ford. Carter has chosen to follow in the strategic footsteps of his predecessors and so, on July 25, he issued Presidential Directive 59. The directive and its accompanying documents call for the emphasis of counterforce targeting in U.S. doctrine, and the modification of our strategic forces in order to increase our counterforce capabilities.

These changes are designed to allow us to respond in kind to any limited strike against military targets in the United States. Advocates of "flexible options" allege that this policy enhances deterrence by increasing the credibility of the American retaliatory threat. Unfortunately, for all of us, this simply is not the case.

"Flexible options" is inherently and immediately dangerous because it makes nuclear war appear to be a rational policy choice. It creates in the minds of government decision-makers the illusion that nuclear exchange can be limited and controlled to serve the ends of policy.

Limited warfare unrealistic

In the words of Paul Warnke, former head of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, such thinking is "apocalyptic nonsense" that serves only to ask nuclear war appear less awful. "Deterrence is always weakened by any strategy that seems to contemplate a limited nuclear war," says Warnke.

Even the Soviets recognize limited nuclear as a dangerous mirage. Robert Legvold, director of soviet studies for the Council on Foreign Relations, has asserted "the Soviets believe that nuclear war is genuinely difficult to control. They seem to recognize that there is no such thing as a neat attack against military targets." In any counterforce strike, collateral damage will occur and civilians will die.

This gray area between counterforce and countervalue attack opens the door to holocaust. Moreover, the kind of cool, rational, and well-informed decision-making that is absolutely necessary to prevent a holocaust is not likely to occur in the context of nuclear exchange. Limited nuclear war is an illusion.

Arms race

Our attempts to acquire the ability to destroy Soviet missiles in their silos are perceived in Moscow as a threat to the Soviet deterrent. This perception of threat is made even more acute because more

Poles won victory for rights, not U.S. ideals

Nothing could have been more appropriate this Labor Day weekend than the agreement won by striking Polish workers with their government.

The Polish government agreed to allow the workers to establish independent trade unions which have the power to represent workers and express opinions to the communist regime.

Of course the government will not dissolve the state-controlled unions, which offer vacations, health care and job transition assistance. And the workers did not win the guarantee that the new unions will be allowed to negotiate wages and benefits, or even be listened to.

All news reports now say the initial victory must be followed up by the workers if it is to be lasting and meaningful, and if even further progress is to be made. That, of course, is obvious.

Progress was made, and a victory was won, even if that victory was small.

The victory was strictly for the Polish people, but the American people seem to view it as their win too.

Perhaps the example of the American people and our powerful labor unions inspired the form of the Polish strikes, but not the reason. An oppressed people will

rebel, whether there is an America to model itself after or not.

Yes, the agreement and the show of labor's power does point up the oppression and weaknesses in the Soviet bloc. And, in our continuing struggle for ideological supremacy and human compassion against the Soviets, the victory represents a great propaganda tool for America.

The people of the United States can be heartened by the rebellion against communism in its Soviet form, and they can be happy for the Polish workers.

But none of us will be living in Poland, working to make the agreement meaningful, fearing possible communist reprisal and struggling to feed our families.

We cannot consider this a victory for the American or the capitalist way of life. The ideals the Polish people fought for were not American ideological fragments, rather, they were human rights and human needs in their rawest form.

They are something people in this country do not fully understand because they have been taken for granted for so long.

Labor won a victory on Labor Day. The Polish workers also won a victory. The American people did not, even though our spirits generally were lifted.

than 70 percent of the Soviet nuclear force consists of vulnerable land-based missiles (as compared to 19 percent of U.S. forces).

Thus the USSR feels compelled to improve its forces in quality and quantity in order to preserve the credibility of their deterrent.

It is apparent that "flexible options" will lead to arms racing in the future. Such competition involves not only huge expenditures, but also increases suspicion and tension between the superpowers, making conflict still more likely.

"Flexible options" is dangerous because it will create a condition of crisis instability. As arms racing results in both sides obtaining counterforce weapons, neither will feel its deterrent secure. The strategic forces of each will have glaring vulnerabilities and the second strike capability of

both will come increasingly into question. In a crisis situation leaders will view their options as "shoot them or lose them." To launch first will be to seize the greatest chance for survival by eliminating as much of the opponent's force as possible. Waiting to respond to an opponent's first strike will appear suicidal. The incentive will clearly favor nuclear attack, and the chances of holocaust will be infinitely greater. This is the long-term consequence of "flexible options." It is hardly a desirable future.

Let us abandon our folly and reverse the tread toward counterforce strategy and nuclear instability. The longer we delay the more difficult it will be to return to sanity. The stakes we are gambling are much too high.

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Wessels says involvement need is great

Guest opinions are selected on the basis of their importance to the student body regarding current issues. Generally the submissions are too long to run as letters to the editor. The Daily Nebraskan reserves the right to select all guest opinion material, which does not necessarily represent the opinions of the paper.

This letter serves several purposes. First of all, I would like to welcome you back to campus, or for new students, to campus. I would also like to briefly explain my role as ASUN president and student regent. Finally, it is necessary to discuss the need for increased student involvement and point out the opportunities ASUN has for improving student representation on campus.

The Association of Students of the University of Nebraska (ASUN) is the student government at UNL. The ASUN Senate is comprised of 35 senators, each elected by their respective colleges in the spring of the year. The executives of ASUN are the first and second vice-presidents and the president. In addition to these elected offices there are numerous commissions, committees and agencies that ASUN

administers as the recognized representative of the student body.

My position as ASUN president and student regent on the NU Board of Regents (the governing body for the university system) is a very diverse one. However, one responsibility that accompanies every projects obligation is communication to the student body and for the student body. It is a primary responsibility to solicit student sentiment and relay it to the administration, the regents, and the Nebraska Legislature.

It is crucial that those who govern us by making rules that affect our college lives understand students and our opinions on issues. On the same hand, it is just as important that we students are aware of the resulting consequences of decisions that various administrations are making.

During the summer months, I have tried to stress student concerns to these individuals through various mediums: one-on-one personal contact, presentations at regents meetings, debates with UNL administration members, discussions with state senators and press conferences with the state-wide media. Concurrently, I have

relayed back information and decisions to the student body, primarily through the *Summer Nebraskan*.

Student concerns

Another major responsibility of my position is helping suggest to others involved in ASUN issues that require the attention of students. Often times my participation as a member of the regents or in dealings with administration will point out these concerns. Issues range from student involvement with the university budget to advocating improved library services and hours to the need for more effectively organized students on campus. Developing plans for how these concerns can best be met is a subsequent responsibility.

The need for student representation at UNL has never been so great. The administration, in dealing with the regents Five-Year Plan, is making significant recommendations at this time. Over the summer, the administration supported the regents accepted—to much student opposition—the elimination of the Centennial Educa-

Continued on Page 5