

Kissinger stress  
on 'dynamic' idea  
of stability

peated appeals for support for his ideas of stability as being in the common interests of the superpowers, which they generally are, and as being in the interests of the lesser powers, which they generally are not, except so far as all states share an interest in the avoidance of strategic nuclear war by the superpowers. But, whereas Metternich confused stability with an ultimately futile attempt to preserve a static *status quo* in a changing international system, Dr. Kissinger has stressed the need for a dynamic conception of stability. Only those changes whose nature or extent could threaten stability are to be prevented, or managed so as to preclude any disruption of the system, thus avoiding Metternich's adoption of a conservatism so rigid that it became as much of an ideological threat to stability as revolution.

This extremely pragmatic conservatism adopted by Dr. Kissinger was practised by Bismarck, the "white revolutionary", who accepted the revolutionary notion of German unification to further his conservative goal of preserving the Prussian monarchy. Hence Bismarck's willingness, in the Kissinger view, to use *Realpolitik* and force, first to secure the unification of Germany and then to manage the resultant balance of power dominated by Germany. Dr. Kissinger clearly admired Bismarck's realism while defending his use of force as justified in an international system where force remains, as Clausewitz described it, the conduct of diplomacy by other means.

Yet Dr. Kissinger recognized that Bismarck, like Metternich, fell victim to the irony that each was the only man who could manage the subtle and complex balances that they had created, providing temporary solutions to ultimately fatal flaws. Critics have argued that the Kissinger system has remained similarly dependent on his personal diplomacy, his temporary successes obscuring his failure to obtain anything more than a sterile stability maintained by the U.S. military machine. But, although following Metternich in his insistence on stability as the basis for any lasting international system and echoing Bismarck's willingness to adopt radical measures to obtain his conservative goals, Dr. Kissinger has also insisted that his conception of an international system has been one reflecting the changing relations of its members and hence of America's vital interests. The real difference between Dr. Kissinger's definitions of stability and those of Metternich and Bismarck has thus been that he has attempted to identify the under-

lying factors in the international system making for manageable change, rather than seeking to impose stability by preventing change.

### Stability through deterrence

Dr. Kissinger's central notion of a polygonal balance of power has been based to a much greater extent than has been realized, on an understanding of the changing utility of both nuclear and conventional forces in international politics. Since force has been the primary means of changing the international system, stability has depended on a preponderance of force being behind the *status quo*, accepted rules being adopted by the great powers for their use of force in pursuing non-disruptive change. These features of nineteenth-century cabinet diplomacy with its emphasis on *Realpolitik* rather than ideology, have been transferred by Dr. Kissinger to the nuclear age, with the stability of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. balance of deterrence seen as sufficiently ensured in 1968, to act as the basis for their management of a balance of power. The main elements are likely to remain relatively constant until the end of the century.

Stable deterrence has become a pre-condition of superpower relations. Paradoxically, provided a basis for defining the superpowers' political relations from their strategic balance. Nuclear weapons have proved to be as suitable for deterrence, the prevention of any change in the post-1945 division of Europe as they have proved unuseable for the employment of force to secure change. The emphasis, in superpower relations, on their mutual recognition of a *status quo* in Europe that neither side finds wholly acceptable but neither can alter by force. Since numerical superiority in strategic weapons can now be seen as politically useless, Dr. Kissinger has substituted his notion of parity, whose implications were spelt out in discussing the May SALT I agreements.

Although nominally an arms-control measure, this really represented a attempt to insulate the superpowers' competition in the development and employment of strategic weapons from their political relations, rather than leaving these at the mercy of changes in military technology. The success of SALT I in separating Soviet-American relations from the progress of a strategic arms race continued at about the same pace as would have been the case without SALT I. This has been evident from the relative lack of concern in the U.S. strategic community