

In that, perhaps, lies the resolution of the paradox of which I spoke a moment ago. In the process of contraction, the whole world has come within the focus of meaningful reality.

Time and space are not the only elements over which our control has been greatly enhanced. Almost wherever we look, whether it be the conquest of outer space or the great advances in medicine or the release of power from the atom or the control of the processes of production by automation, science and technology have enabled us to increase our mastery over the human environment. They have unlocked vast new promises and opportunities which have never before been within the grasp of man.

In short, change within the last generation or so has been on such a spectacular scale that we can fairly speak of living in a "new world". But change has also, inevitably, brought in its wake "new problems". And it is important -- as Senator Fulbright reminded us in his excellent little book -- that we tackle these "new problems" on the basis not of old myths but of the new realities.

I should like to begin by saying something about the realities of power in the modern world. We were used to think of power as an aggregate of certain factors -- the dimensions of a country, the size of its population, the wealth of its resources. But those are not the ingredients of power today. Any country, once it has developed an independent nuclear capability with the means of delivering the weapons in its nuclear arsenal, has acquired power which does not necessarily bear any definable relation to either size or resources.

The nature of modern power rests in the capacity of a country to inflict an unacceptable degree of damage on an opponent. This presents us with another paradox. For it means that, as we are coming within the range of absolute power, absolute security recedes from the realm of practical possibility.

It also means that power on that scale has made war obsolete as an instrument of policy. It has done that because the application of such power is disproportionate to almost any policy objective we can conceive. As Henry Kissinger has argued, "a basic discontinuity is established when a statesman is compelled to risk tens of millions of lives instead of thousands, when his decision no longer involves the loss of a province but the survival of society itself".

Those, at least, are the assumptions that lie behind the conception of modern nuclear power as a deterrent. But this is a very tenuous basis on which to construct a system of international security, for two reasons. First, because this kind of power is irrelevant to most of the situations of conflict and instability with which we are confronted in the world today. And second, because the assumptions themselves on which the whole conception of the nuclear deterrent is based are not necessarily immutable.

I say that because the prospect of proliferation is always with us and we cannot be sure that the nuclear powers of tomorrow will form the same appreciation of the elemental risks inherent in the use of nuclear weapons as