

BOOKS

Realistic Guidance

reviewed by Maj F. G. Hoffman, USMCR

DIPLOMACY. By Henry Kissinger. Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 1994, 912 pp., \$35.00. (Member \$31.50)

Thucydides offered his timeless account of the struggle between Athens and Sparta not for a contemporary audience but for future decisionmakers. He stated:

It will be enough for me, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will . . . be repeated in the future.

Henry Kissinger, former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, shares Thucydides' pessimism and purpose. *Diplomacy* was drafted to advise those who want to understand clearly the events of the past to prepare for the future. With the end of the Soviet Union and the rise of ethnic violence and virulent nationalism, there is a market for such an effort. The promising New World Order of just a few years ago turns out to be neither new or orderly. As Thucydides predicted, human nature being what it is, the world remains a messy place. Dr. Kissinger shares this pessimism and finds that the world is getting messier:

. . . never before has a new world order had to be assembled from so many different perceptions, or on so global a scale. Nor has any previous order had to combine the attributes of the historic balance of power systems with global democratic opinion and the exploding technology of the contemporary period.

In *Diplomacy*, Dr. Kissinger strives to cover over 300 years of foreign policy, diplomatic negotiations, and strategy. His is a formidable and impressive history. The title is somewhat misleading, for diplomacy implies the narrow use of political persuasion and subtle coercion to achieve policy goals. Kissinger paints with a larger brush and addresses a wider landscape by assessing the great strategists

and foreign ministers that advanced the security interests of their respective states by shaping a stable international order.

The central purpose of this extensive and highly readable effort is to discern how previous ages have struggled in facing new security environments and how they succeeded in molding order out of chaos. Secretary Kissinger applies this timely assessment to draw lessons for the United States.

Kissinger's mastery of the subject matter is clearly evident. The history is always eloquent and frequently elucidating. Its subject matter is somewhat selective by addressing solely European and American diplomatic history. Even these are covered episodically, and focused on central actors like Richelieu, Pitt, Bismark, and Wilson.

View of the World

Dr. Kissinger is a noted proponent for the realist school of foreign affairs. This school of thought sees the world system as naturally anarchic and focuses with laser-like precision upon the use of cold-hearted power to preserve the security of the state. In a multipolar world, this security has historically been achieved diplomatically through alliances to preserve a balance of power. This balance of power among the major states maintains the equilibrium of the international order in the same manner as the general stability of Europe during the 19th century after the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars.

Diplomacy is an extensive justification and application of realism and Bismarckian *realpolitik* to our present security environment. This application may be misfounded and inappropriate for the United States. Such approaches, including Bismarck's employment of secretive alliances and entangling relationships, are usually an anathema to American political leaders. This distaste goes as far back as Washington's Farewell Address.

American Political Culture

The author is fully aware that his prescriptions run counter to major elements in American political culture. Despite el-

ements of pragmatism, our culture is strongly influenced by idealism and moral values. This contrast generates conflict between alternative approaches to American involvement in foreign affairs. One approach is the cold rational approach favored in Europe and advocated by Kissinger. The other approach is built more on idealism than power. The tension generated by these alternative approaches is clearly evident in the recent debates surrounding U.S. interventions in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia.

Kissinger has been criticized in the past for failing to discern this element of our national character and strategic culture. One of his biographers, Walter Isaacson, feels that Kissinger fails to appreciate the benefits that America derives from its democratic traditions and values. Kissinger now seems fully aware of this dimension, although he evidences little empathy with either its roots or positive influence in American policymaking.

As a structural vehicle to present the opposing elements in our political culture, Dr. Kissinger opens his opus with a chapter contrasting the idealist moralism embodied by Woodrow Wilson and the activist form of realism preached by Theodore Roosevelt. This is a unique comparison, although the contrast can be taken as far back as the fundamental arguments about U.S. foreign policy between Jefferson and Hamilton.

Kissinger criticizes Wilson for his idealism, and the tendency to let American exceptionalism and idealism outrun our true interests. Idealism can quickly turn to moralism and lofty crusades. For Kissinger, Teddy Roosevelt offers the opposite pole, since he was a sophisticated student of realism. This sets up a useful framework for studying U.S. policy and grand strategy for the present and for the future.

Prescriptions

Despite his predisposition toward a European brand of amoral rationalism in drawing prescriptions, the author acknowledges the impact of our idealism and its contribution to our strategic culture. Kissinger fears that the United States will either charge about idealistically into interventions where key interests are not at risk, or withdraw from our engagement in the world to focus myopically on internal affairs. Both options are dangerous for our long-term interests. Dr. Kissinger accurately calls for a

synthesis of the contrasting aspects of our political culture, and a more discriminate level of intervention.

America's dominant task is to strike a balance between the twin temptations inherent in its exceptionalism: the notion that America must remedy every wrong and stabilize every dislocation, and the latent instinct to withdraw into itself. Indiscriminate involvement in all the ethnic turmoil and civil wars of the post-Cold War world would drain a crusading America. Yet an America that confines itself to the refinement of its domestic virtues would in the end abdicate America's security and prosperity . . .

Kissinger argues that we neither have the will or wallet to dominate events nor are we sufficiently strong enough to isolate ourselves. While our ideals remain essential, he does insist we could jeopardize our greatness with illusions about the limits of our reach and capacity. This counsel is clearly appropriate in the face

of the many challenges on the international scene today, and our urgent need for a clear-headed approach to separate those that mandate U.S. political or military involvement from crises that do not engage critical interests. In Kissinger's words, the United States "must learn to navigate between necessity and choice."

In sum, *Diplomacy* is a timely overview of foreign policy and grand strategy. It is of great value today in discovering the past, giving coherency to the present, and offering insights into the future. Such a work has relevance for senior Marine leaders to guide their policy advice at the national level. For this reason, I would recommend this book for general officers or colonels and any strategist interested in historical studies with practical application. Additionally, Dr. Kissinger's chapters covering containment and the Vietnam War provide excellent material for the Marine Corps University's strategy and policy curriculum.

Thucydides was both an astute historian and the first realist. "My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public," the Athenian Admiral said, "but was done to last forever." Kissinger's work was written for the needs of an immediate public, but human nature being what it is, its influence could approach that of Thucydides.

USMC

>Maj Hoffman, a frequent contributor, is currently working for the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces.

Tiger Papa Three Revisited

reviewed by Maj Edward F. Palm, USMC (Ret)

A VOICE OF HOPE. By Thomas Flynn. Voice Book Productions, P.O. Box 1575, New Port Richey, FL 34656-1575, 1994, 184 pp., \$6.99.

"Stories," Vietnam novelist Tim O'Brien has written, "are for joining the past to the future. Stories are for those late hours in the night when you can't remember how you got from where you were to where you are" (*The Things They Carried*). To paraphrase O'Brien, I'm 47 years old and a professor now. But a long time ago, I was a Marine corporal and a patrol leader assigned to the Combined Action Program (CAP) in Vietnam. Now, thanks to this book, Thomas Flynn's unvarnished memoir of his CAP service, I have a much clearer understanding of the things I've carried, and that have carried me, from there to here.

Long-time readers of this magazine may recall that I too published a CAP memoir; my two-part article appeared in 1988, in the January and February issues.

I titled my article "Tiger Papa Three," after the radio call sign of Papa Three, the combined action unit I served with. Tom Flynn, as it turns out, was also a Papa Three Marine.

Flynn had been a member of the original start-up group and had been badly wounded and evacuated in the first attack on Papa Three, some 2 months before I got there. He was apparently back on duty with the company headquarters in Cam Lo for most of my tour with Papa Company, but we never met. As I recount in my article, the Papa Three of my time—August 1967 to January 1968—was a dismal failure. Anyone still interested in the reasons for that failure should turn to Flynn's account of Papa Three's first 6 months. But his story is certainly much more than a preface or "prequel" to mine. *A Voice of Hope* stands alone as an honest and unaffected account of a former CAP Marine who suffered and almost died in the name of combined action.

A Voice of Hope traces Flynn's progress through his Vietnam tour, from reporting to staging battalion at Camp Pendleton to lifting off from Danang in a C-130

13 months later. He was initially assigned to Company E, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, in and around Camp Carroll, where he spent a largely uneventful 2 months before the regiment was tapped for rotation back to Okinawa. Flynn, however, was not destined to go with it.



All Marines new "in country," Flynn soon learned, were being reassigned to other units, and he in particular had been volunteered for a program he knew nothing about called "CAC"—short for "Combined Action Company."

After a short stop at the Combined Action School in Phu Bai, Flynn found himself one of the original group sent