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James R. Schlesinger was the youngest Secretary of Defense and the first to have no prior military experience but service fears that he shared other "whiz kid" attributes were erased (or at least balanced) by his articulation of coherent rationales for U.S. strategic and conventional forces. This evaluation of Schlesinger's tenure is adapted by the author from a chapter in his forthcoming Five Secretaries of Defense.

JAMES R. SCHLESINGER AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

by

Douglas Kinnard

The years 1973-1975 were hard times to be the Secretary of Defense. There was that crisis in American Government known by the code name Watergate. There was the resignation not only of a President but also of a Vice President. It was an unhappy economic time for America—the most unhappy, up to then, since the Great Depression. The international scene was no less disturbing. Most traumatic was the dramatic ending of the most unpopular war in American history, one that had cost 50,000 American lives and \$150 billion in treasure. Détente also seemed to be less than it was billed. How else to explain, for instance, the Soviet-supported, if not inspired, Yom Kippur war?

In those turbulent years came along a relatively unknown scholar-bureaucrat—James Rodney Schlesinger—propelled by Watergate onto the national scene to be the Secretary of Defense. Certainly no one who had held the office up to then was technically more qualified for

the position, although in terms of having the proper political skills and necessary political sensitivity, many of his predecessors were better qualified.

From his earlier 4 years of government experience working on various aspects of national security questions, Schlesinger was aware in advance of the problems facing the Department whose leadership he assumed in the summer of 1973.¹ The legacy of the Vietnam war hung heavy in the Pentagon: operating costs of the war had postponed new capital investment and major overhaul work, resulting in serious equipment shortages, especially in combat ships and tanks; research and development had been neglected, again because of the cost of the war; the morale of the armed forces in general, and of the Army in particular, was at a low ebb; implementation of the all-volunteer force, itself a product of the war, had been completed but the "new military" was faced with major personnel problems because the quality of volunteer recruits

was not high as it might have been; further, the high pay costs of the volunteer force were beginning to cut deeply into the defense budget.

Schlesinger approached his job with two goals. First, he was determined to undo the Vietnam legacy, to rebuild the American military machine by improving its morale, its efficiency, and its aging weapons and combat systems. Second, he was committed to revising U.S. strategic policy, whose evolution since the 1960s had disturbed him greatly.

Schlesinger arrived at the Pentagon with his own world view. He had developed it over many years, and it had been reinforced by his experience in government since 1969. The Schlesinger world view never altered either during his term at the head of the Defense Department or afterward. The vision was simple, clear, and unwavering. A single theme connects the early statements with the later ones, and all are built upon a logical progression of ideas. The first principle to be recognized, Schlesinger said, was that armed force constituted one of the basic ordering factors in the international system:

Power remains the ultimate sanction in dealing with potential conflict. Where power exists and is respected, it will not have to be exercised. Through power one can deter the initiation of an unfavorable chain of events. To be sure, military power is not the only form of power, but it remains an irreplaceable element in the total mix of power; without it, the disadvantageous turn in events would be swift and sure.²

Given such a world it followed that the United States, regardless of its diplomatic intentions and nonbelligerent foreign policy goals, needed to maintain military forces. "It is necessary for the United States to participate in the maintenance of a worldwide equilibrium of forces," Schlesinger noted,

and this requires the American people to do what seems to some to be inconsistent: to pursue detente—an alleviation of political tensions—and to maintain an adequate defense capability. We want to have a relaxation of political relations with the Soviet Union, and at the same time our military posture must be sufficiently strong so that we maintain worldwide equilibrium of military forces.³

The Second World War had thrust the mantle of free world leadership on the United States; Western Europe's postwar weakness had made America the defender of democracy. Although Americans had not sought such a role, and in fact had attempted to avoid it, Schlesinger now saw no alternative route for the United States:

... we now unavoidably have the leading part in the defense arrangements of the free world. There is no substitute among the other industrialized democracies for the power of the United States. . . . We are not the policemen of the world, but we are the backbone of free world collective security.⁴

During his short stay in the CIA Schlesinger had taken a close look at intelligence estimates concerning the Soviet Union and what he saw disturbed him. His own view was that Soviet defense effort was being considerably underestimated. He had a suspicion that people wanted to believe what the Soviets were saying, and some attempt had to be made to get into intelligence data in a more rigorous way.⁵

To assist in this problem Schlesinger brought to the Pentagon an old friend from RAND days, Andrew Marshall, to head up the Net Assessment Office of the Defense Department.⁶ What Schlesinger sought was analysis of a type that other agencies were not engaged in, or were doing in ways that could be

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improved upon, such as: comparative costs of U.S. and Soviet military programs; naval balance between the United States and the U.S.S.R.; political and psychological aspects of military forces—how, for example, does deterrence actually work, viewed from a Soviet perspective?

To return to the question of Schlesinger's view of the world and the United States' place in it, Schlesinger felt that, given the world situation and U.S. commitments, it was time to re-examine the adequacy of post-Vietnam U.S. strategic policy and U.S. forces.

Highest priority was accorded the question of the role of nuclear weapons. The McNamara years had been the formative era of American strategic doctrine. With only minor modifications, the U.S. plan for strategic war in 1973 was the same as the policy of "assured destruction plus flexible response" that had emerged in 1966. Briefly stated, that policy separated the problem of strategic defense into two areas: deterrence of nuclear attack against the continental United States, and defense of Western Europe against both conventional and nuclear attack.

"Assured destruction" related to the first task. It denoted the theory that the threat of overwhelming retaliation could be relied on to deter the Soviets from ever launching an attack, and declared that the United States would maintain a strategic arsenal of sufficient size and diversity so as to be able, even in the event of a surprise Soviet nuclear attack, to destroy 25 percent of the U.S.S.R.'s population and 75 percent of its industrial base. The policy of assured destruction was also extended to deter the Soviets from launching a nuclear attack on Western Europe or Japan: the American strategic arsenal was thus linked to the prevention of any Soviet nuclear strike on the Western allies.

Under the policy of "flexible response" the United States pledged itself to aid NATO to defend against Red

army attack by supplying general-purpose forces to the Alliance. Should NATO's conventional strength prove incapable of containing the Soviet thrust, American forces would escalate to the use of tactical nuclear weapons, both for their military effect and as a warning to the Soviets to halt lest the situation escalate further. In the event the Soviet attack continued, regardless of tactical nuclear weapon use, the United States would employ strategic nuclear weapons to attack targets inside the U.S.S.R.

Schlesinger, in his days at RAND, had observed the evolution of this strategic doctrine with great uneasiness. In addition to his basic misgivings about the wisdom of the doctrine, he "became haunted by Strangelove scenarios of accidental nuclear confrontation" and began to hypothesize about alternative strategic postures. When he became Secretary of Defense he conducted a thorough review of American strategic plans and pronounced them as constituting an unsatisfactory policy.⁷

Schlesinger's criticism was based on several premises. His first argument was that the Soviet Union's achievement in the early 1970s of an assured destruction capability against the United States had changed strategic conditions: no longer could the United States employ the ultimate threat of striking at Soviet cities in the event of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, for the Soviets were now capable of destroying American cities in retaliation. Second, Schlesinger found that U.S. nuclear options were not carefully conceived. It was, therefore, conceivable that the explosion of a single Soviet weapon on U.S. soil could trigger an American response that would initiate a holocaust. Schlesinger found this unacceptable. Finally, he found the policy of destroying Soviet cities as a punishment for an act of the Soviet Government to be "morally defective."

Having identified these flaws, Schlesinger set out to correct them. In addition to his own strongly held views,

the impetus for the change was largely extrabureaucratic; it came from former associates at RAND and elsewhere, but not from within the Pentagon.⁸ His supporters in the revision of strategic doctrine were those most concerned with the effects of mutual assured destruction on extended deterrence; his opponents were an unusual coalition of "military conservatives and veteran arms controllers" who feared that a move away from the existing policy would make nuclear war more likely.⁹

On 10 January 1974, in remarks to the Overseas Writers Association Luncheon in Washington, Schlesinger announced that "a change [had taken place] in the strategies of the United States with regard to the hypothetical employment of central strategic forces, a change in targeting strategy, as it were."¹⁰ That change, he continued, involved a shift in strategic doctrine itself:

To a large extent the American doctrinal position has been wrapped around something called "assured destruction" which implies a tendency to target Soviet cities initially and massively and that this is the principal option that the President would have. It is our intention that this not be the only option and possibly not the principal option open to the National Command Authorities.¹¹

By far the most complete public presentation of the reasons impelling a new targeting doctrine and the dimensions of that doctrine appeared a little more than a month later in Schlesinger's presentation of the Fiscal Year 1975 Defense Budget to Congress. Morality and the Soviet-assured destruction capability were among the points stressed:

Not only must those in power consider the morality of threatening such terrible retribution on the Soviet people for some

ill-defined transgression by their leaders; in the most practical terms, they must also question the prudence and plausibility of such a response when the enemy is able, even after some sort of first strike, to maintain the capability of destroying our cities. The wisdom and credibility of relying simply on the preplanned strikes of assured destruction are even more in doubt when allies rather than the United States itself face the threat of a nuclear war.¹²

Further, he told the Congress, the United States must take into account the threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons:

It is even more essential that we focus on the issues that could arise if and when several additional nations acquire nuclear weapons, not necessarily against the United States, but for possible use or pressure against one another. Such a development could have a considerable impact on our own policies, plans, and programs. Indeed this prospect alone should make it evident that no single target system and no stereotyped scenario of mutual city destruction will suffice as the basis for our strategic planning.¹³

Schlesinger's answer to the problems he set out in his statement was a new American approach to strategic planning. It emphasized flexibility and the capability of meeting a limited nuclear provocation at the level of violence of that attack:

But if, for whatever reason, deterrence should fail, we want to have the planning flexibility to be able to respond selectively to the attack in such a way as to (1) limit the chances of uncontrolled escalation, and (2) hit meaningful targets with a sufficient accuracy-yield combination to destroy only the intended target and to

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avoid widespread collateral damage.¹⁴

The introduction of flexible strategic targeting was the heart of Schlesinger's changes in American nuclear planning. It did not, however, constitute the sum total of his effect on strategic doctrine. As he observed the Soviet strategic arms buildup during the course of 1974, and noted that the new generation of Russian missiles was armed with large, potentially "silo-killing" warheads, Schlesinger decided that the United States must react to the quantitative and qualitative challenge. Accordingly, in his *Report to the Congress* for the following fiscal year, he called for increased research and development funding for maneuverable warheads and new intercontinental missiles that could carry out counterforce strikes (against enemy nuclear forces). American strategic forces, he noted in the report, "should have some ability to destroy hard targets, even though we would prefer to see both sides avoid major counterforce capabilities. We do not propose, however, to concede to the Soviets a unilateral advantage in this realm. Accordingly, our programs will depend on how far the Soviets go in developing a counterforce capability of their own."

In response to critics who stated that counterforce weapons would destabilize the strategic nuclear balance, Schlesinger argued that a unilateral counterforce capability was far more destabilizing than a mutual capability. The research and development work was approved and went forward. To meet the numerical imbalance that the Soviet arms program threatened, the Secretary of Defense urged that the United States maintain "essential equivalence" in central strategic systems, and that the Russian challenge could not be ignored. The U.S. strategic force, he asserted, must be maintained so that it possessed "a range and magnitude of capabilities such that everyone—friend, foe, and

domestic audiences alike—will perceive that we are the equal of our strongest competitors."¹⁵

Schlesinger firmly believed, however, that successful deterrence was not solely the product of nuclear forces. In fact, notwithstanding the attention that his statements on nuclear strategy received, he felt that there had been a "long term fascination with nuclear weapons which had skewed American policy toward overreliance on nuclear as opposed to conventional forces."¹⁶ This preoccupation had in turn led to neglect of conventional forces that were intended to be complementary to the nuclear forces, forces needed to support the strategic policy underlying American foreign policy.

As Schlesinger surveyed the state of America's conventional forces, he was not satisfied that they were in fact complementary. Unlike his difficulties with the strategic forces, which focused on planning deficiencies, his criticism of general-purpose forces was directed at actual combat capabilities, both manpower and hardware. The shortcomings he perceived were owing to the changing international situation; when he was at the Bureau of the Budget he regarded the nation's military forces as too large for the roles they had to play and the enemies they had to meet. As he later testified to the Congress, during his Budget days, "I thought the Defense Establishment was too large, and I wished to bring it back down to roughly the size that had prevailed pre[Vietnam] war."¹⁷ "It was not until approximately Fiscal Year 1972," he continued, "that we reached a position in which I personally thought we were on the thin side."¹⁸

The difference between 1969 and 1974 as pertains to the Soviet Union and the United States, Schlesinger argued, was that the United States no longer enjoyed a significant strategic nuclear advantage over its potential enemy. Deficiencies in general-purpose

forces had become more critical, he felt, as the Soviet Union embarked, in the late 1960s, on a major upgrading of its own conventional forces, one that included a substantial increase in frontline Army manpower, accelerated production of new types of tactical aircraft and armored vehicles, and continued expansion of the Soviet Navy. As a result of this buildup, "nowhere on the Eurasian continent is the Soviet position itself threatened by a local imbalance. In all sectors around the periphery, the Soviets possess a clear edge . . ." ¹⁹

Thus the United States (and its NATO allies), through its conventional force weaknesses, was in essence undercutting its own strategic policy by maintaining not much more than tripwire forces, lowering the level of the nuclear threshold, and perhaps even inviting a conventional assault.

Schlesinger's plan to improve conventional capabilities called for improving the combat efficiency of the Army by altering the "teeth to tail" ratio—the proportion of combat soldiers to support troops. Other Schlesinger ideas in his first budget to help renovate the Army were an increase in the production rate of main battle tanks and helicopters, and an application "of the lessons of the recent Middle East war by giving high priority to . . . modern anti-tank weapons, tanks, air defense of land forces and its opposite, defense suppression, improving munitions and larger stocks." ²⁰ The next year's request called for 16 Army divisions, again to be manned through an improvement to existing teeth-to-tail ratios. The budgets made clear that Schlesinger, unlike some of his predecessors, truly meant what he said about improving general-purpose force capabilities.

Bolstering American forces and improving their combat efficiency could not of itself suffice to correct the military imbalance that faced the NATO allies. The European allies had to be energized for a greater effort, he felt, if

the imbalance between NATO and Soviet forces was to be corrected.

By 1975, therefore, Schlesinger carried a message to Europe that he had been delivering to domestic audiences for some time. In his self-cast role as "sort of an international missionary for defense," Schlesinger told the 21st annual meeting of the North Atlantic Alliance that "the good life must be protected in order to be preserved." The absence of overt conflict with the Soviet Union over a 30-year period had fostered a psychological climate in Europe, he stated, such that "the Western allies are in danger of falling into the pit of postwar folly because of a feeling that security falls like manna from heaven rather than from collective efforts and sacrifices." ²¹ This, he warned, was practicing dangerous self-deception. The loss of American strategic nuclear superiority meant that the United States could not permit the Soviet Union to maintain a major advantage in conventional power—Schlesinger declared that NATO must strengthen its conventional forces on the European front. Accordingly, he called on NATO governments to increase their individual defense spending to an equivalent of 4 to 5 percent of their state's Gross National Product.

Secretary Schlesinger put a good deal of effort into attempting to revitalize NATO. In this effort he met with modest success. More importantly, he set the stage for other major efforts in that area in later years.

Obtaining the required resources to provide the manpower and material to give reality to Secretary Schlesinger's view of the United States' role in the world and strategic concepts was another question. In dollar terms, defense spending had not changed much since the peak year of 1968. However, in terms of the value of the dollar, there had been an enormous decline. From fiscal year 1968, when spending had been \$99.6 billion, it had declined

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during Schlesinger's first year in office to \$67.8 billion.^{2 2}

His objective was to reverse that trend. Secretary Laird had held the line as best he could, with a Congress disaffected over Vietnam in particular and defense spending in general. But as Schlesinger viewed what he perceived to be deteriorating American military power, coincident with increasing Soviet military strength, he knew the budget would be the major battleground for correcting this growing imbalance.

There would not be much help from the President on this budget; heavily preoccupied with Watergate, Nixon, though he kept his foreign policy interests, had drifted away from any particular interest in, or close analysis of, defense matters. For example, at his annual meeting with the Joint Chiefs in December 1973, where defense problems were discussed prior to Presidential approval of the Fiscal Year 1975 defense budget, Nixon was described by one of the military Chiefs present as follows:

... the President used the ostensible budget meeting to engage in a long, rambling monologue, which at times almost seemed to be a stream of consciousness, about the virtues of his domestic and foreign policy . . . [He presented] the very disturbing spectacle of a man who had pumped his adrenalin up to such a high pressure that he was on an emotional binge. He appeared to me to be incapable of carrying on a rational conversation, much less exercising rational leadership . . .^{2 3}

In February 1974 Schlesinger led off the support of the defense budget by appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee in a bravura performance. He began, "As the Psalmist tells us, 'Where there is no vision the people perish.'" Then he went on to what *The New York Times* called an

extemporaneous 70-minute talk,^{2 4} and did in fact ask for an \$85.8 billion budget.

There ensued a torrent of newspaper comment, much of it critical, about the defense budget request. However, Schlesinger was prepared to stay the course without any apologies. A few weeks after his Senate appearance Schlesinger went before the House Appropriations Committee and was afterward questioned by newsmen:

Q: But you don't give any indication that there's going to be a reduction in the Defense spending from now on, it's just going to keep going up, up, up?

A: I think that any further reductions would be imprudent for the United States. We should maintain the same force structure and roughly the same military manpower.

Q: To do that it will cost more money every year?

A: It will cost more money every year, in the same way that I suspect that the payroll costs of CBS or NBS or ABC are going up each year and you fellows are delighted with it.

In the end Congress made some cuts to an \$83 billion spending authorization, but it was still the largest military appropriation bill ever passed by Congress. Still, in constant dollars Schlesinger did not reverse the trend. Inflation was still ahead and defense spending in real terms was down about one billion.^{2 5}

By the time serious preparation got under way on the fiscal year 1976 budget, the new White House occupant, Gerald Ford, was already beset with economic problems, especially inflation. However, Schlesinger, basing his estimate on Ford's background as a former pro-Pentagon member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee, was reasonably certain that the defense budget would not bear the burden of any anti-inflation cut. Also, as the year wore on unemployment rather than inflation seemed to loom as the big

problem. It seemed possible that the President might conclude that a big shot of defense spending was just what was needed to stimulate employment.

However, even though Congress might agree the economy needed stimulating, there were ways to do this other than defense spending. Moreover, the Congress elected in that fall of 1974, especially in the House, turned out to be heavily Democratic and antidefense. Thus, the stage was set for an executive-legislative battle over the FY 1976 defense budget, one that wore on into the fall of 1975.

In addition to the sheer size of the defense budget, certain criticisms focused on specific defense programs. One of these, on which confrontation was to rage for many years, was the B-1 strategic bomber to replace the "aging" B-52.

Despite the many arguments against the B-1 bomber, Schlesinger supported the program fully and was able to keep it under development. His support was based on two points: first, that the existence of a U.S. strategic bomber force complicated the Soviet Union's allocation of defense resources; second, that the bomber force offset the missile advantage given to the Soviets by the 1972 strategic arms limitation agreement. That pact, he noted, in establishing "lower limits for United States missile forces than those applied to the Soviets, implicitly compensated for a larger number of U.S. bombers. Logically, this points, once again, to the necessity of a bomber follow-on."²⁶

Furthermore, Schlesinger believed that bombers, which are incapable of first-strike missions, enhanced strategic stability and were therefore inherently preferable to more destabilizing systems. The final decision to begin full-scale production of the B-1 would, he stated, be based on the airplane's performance in a series of rigorous tests and evaluations, and would exclude consideration of the aircraft's high unit

cost because, as Schlesinger expressed it, "America's strategic nuclear forces were bought not for their specific cost effective contribution to target destruction, narrowly defined, but for their broader contribution to that panoply of power that maintains deterrence."²⁷

Schlesinger made his presentation of the fiscal year 1976 budget request to the Senate Armed Services Committee on 5 February 1975. This time he had another biblical quotation to lead off with: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." To "keep the goods in peace," Schlesinger was asking for \$92.8 billion in spending, another record request.

This time his approach ran into difficulty with the House of Representatives as a whole. The battle raged into the fall with the House making budget request cuts of about seven billion dollars, cuts that Schlesinger felt were very unwise. He then took the extraordinary step of writing a letter (which his office subsequently made public) to Senator John McClellan, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, asking that the House cuts be restored. Although Schlesinger appeared to have the backing of the President, who opposed any cut in the defense budget, the tone of Schlesinger's letter to McClellan did not sit well with the former Representative Gerald Ford. In the course of the letter Schlesinger attacked the House action as being "deep, savage, and arbitrary."²⁸ One of the most powerful legislators in Washington and a close friend of President Ford, House Appropriations Committee Chairman George Mahon, presumably resented Schlesinger's attack.²⁹ Ultimately, although he got a record budget of about \$91 billion, Schlesinger did not get the figure he wanted, and in terms of constant dollars the downward trend in the defense budget continued.³⁰

Meanwhile, the Defense Department and White House were deeply into preparation of the fiscal year 1977

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budget. On 1 November 1975 the Defense Secretary met with the President on that subject and Schlesinger proposed that defense expenditures for the following year total \$102 billion, up about \$9 billion from the current year.³¹ However, the following year was a Presidential election year and Ford's political advisers, at this point at least, had talked him into running on a balanced budget theme. Therefore, at issue that morning was a White House-proposed cut in Schlesinger's budget of about \$5 billion, documented by a memorandum from his Office of Management and Budget to the effect that the defense budget could indeed take a cut of that magnitude. Schlesinger objected that a cut of such magnitude would require an ill-advised decline of 200,000 personnel in active military strength. The meeting concluded without final decisions being made, but with Schlesinger implying that he might not be able to support a defense budget slashed as deeply as the White House proposed.³²

After leaving the meeting Schlesinger was informed that the President wanted to see him the following day at 8:30 a.m. at the White House. The outcome of this and other meetings that day resulted in what was later called the "Sunday Massacre," summarized in *The New York Times* headlines on the following day: "Ford Discharges Schlesinger and Colby and Asks Kissinger To Give Up His Security Post [National Security Adviser]"; "Rumsfeld Is Seen As New Defense Chief—Bush For C.I.A."

There have been many explanations for so precipitous a termination of the tenure of the 12th Secretary of Defense. Ford offered one at a press conference on Monday evening after the firing:

Q: Mr. President, could you tell us why Mr. Schlesinger and Mr. Colby did not fit on your new team?

A: I think any President has to have the opportunity to put together his own

team. They were kept on when I assumed office because I wanted continuity. But any President to do the job that's needed and necessary has to have his own team in the area of foreign policy.³³

While in general terms it is hard to argue with the principle the President was enunciating, in fact the problem went somewhat deeper. Schlesinger himself tied it to the disagreement on the defense budget, which he characterized as the "chief substantive issue" that led to his dismissal. Probably that was the immediate precipitating issue, if one accepts the suggestion that Schlesinger had "pointedly declined to endorse the re-election of President Ford until he saw how the national security issue 'shaped up.'" ³⁴ The President was said to feel that Schlesinger's public position against the budget cuts and his own unwillingness to attack the Congress was making him appear "soft on defense," an especially important point given his challenge for the renomination by conservative Republican Ronald Reagan.³⁵

The détente issue entails another aspect—the Kissinger-Schlesinger relationship—that is an issue many focus on in explaining Schlesinger's resignation. This explanation runs as follows: Schlesinger's relations with the Secretary of State had declined steadily since the Yom Kippur war period. This was because of Schlesinger's increasingly skeptical view of Kissinger's détente policy, based on his perceptions that the Soviets were not living up to the provisions of SALT I, that they were embarked upon an expansionist foreign policy, and that Kissinger's approach to negotiations offered too many unilateral U.S. concessions. In June 1974 Schlesinger and Kissinger had disagreed over a proposed SALT II package to be submitted to the Soviets at the Moscow summit. The proposal was deferred, resulting in another clash between the two men before the Vladivostok meetings in December of that year. The

dispute became increasingly public: the *Annual Department of Defense Report for FY 1976 and FY 1977*, published in February 1975, contained political analysis stating, in implicit contradiction to Kissinger's position, that the Soviet view of détente was that it was an adversarial relationship.³⁶ In early October 1975 the Pentagon circulated an intelligence assessment, said to have Schlesinger's approval, that stated that the Soviets were "using the policy of détente to gain dominance over the West in all fields."³⁷ The Kissinger-Schlesinger antagonism, if such it was, of course, would be an uncomfortable one for Ford, and no President would wish to go into an election year with his principal advisers on national security policy and foreign policy disagreeing on issues as important as détente and SALT.

Another explanation of the dismissal has to do with relations between Schlesinger and Congress. Schlesinger's October letter attacking the House for its cuts in his FY 1976 budget obviously alienated many of Ford's former colleagues. It is also true that Schlesinger was disliked by certain members of both Houses merely for his abrasive manner. However, in general, Schlesinger had been quite effective with Congress, especially on a one-to-one basis.

Finally there was the matter of the Ford-Schlesinger personality conflict. Ford was never comfortable with Schlesinger and never really understood his mode of operation. Schlesinger, for his part, was disconcerted by Ford's method of compromising on issues in a nonrational manner. In short, Schlesinger, in sharp contrast to Ford, was not preeminently political in outlook. And at a more basic level, Ford resented Schlesinger's constant lecturing.³⁸

Probably the real explanation is some combination of the foregoing. In any case, the firing was a political error on the part of the President. Rather than present the image of being "in charge,"

the firing created an image of a White House in disarray. More important, it conveyed the impression of a President who was "soft" on defense matters and who wanted to cut into U.S. defenses. In one of those strange swings of American public opinion there was suddenly a shift of support for a greater defense effort.

Schlesinger transferred from his big office in the Pentagon to a scholar's office in Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies in Washington. Using that as a base he became a very popular lecturer, taking his case on the need for greater defense effort to the campuses, to the business world, and to the people.

The outcome of all this was ironic. In January 1976 the new Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, went before Congress defending a budget fairly close to the one that had brought Schlesinger to his final confrontation with Ford. While Congress did not go along with the entire request it did reverse, for the first time since 1968, the downward trend in real defense spending.³⁹ James R. Schlesinger did achieve his budgetary goal, though at the cost of his Office!

Any fair evaluation of Schlesinger's 28 months at the Pentagon requires an outstanding rating. For the first time since the early McNamara period an American military strategy was articulated in a public forum, and even if not embraced by all elements of the polity, it was ultimately accepted as a better course of action for America than passively continuing to wring our hands over Southeast Asia.

For one of his major goals, rebuilding the U.S. Military Establishment in the post-Vietnam era, he receives high marks. He provided the intellectual and philosophical direction—as well as the congressional support—that permitted the American Military Establishment to regroup and rebuild after the Vietnam turmoil.

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In another major objective, re-directing strategic doctrine, he succeeded also. His rearticulation of nuclear strategy was, if initially misunderstood, masterful and long overdue. His real emphasis, however, was on developing a stronger conventional force; here he met at least with a fair degree of success. An element of this was his concern about the state of NATO. By the time he left office he had become "something of a 'guru' to the defense ministers of Western Europe, supplying them with philosophical arguments to defend their military programs and reinstalling some sense of purpose within the NATO alliance."⁴⁰

His public positions on détente and the defense budget were taken with a definite purpose in mind. As Schlesinger noted:

Why do I make this a cause? Because that is the responsibility of my position. If we are to maintain a position of power, the public must be informed about the trends. Some years from now, somebody will ask the question why were we not warned, and I want to be able to say, indeed you were.⁴¹

In this, too, he was successful. Within months of his departure from office,

proposed budget cuts had been restored, the policies of the Soviet Union were being viewed with increasing public skepticism, and domestic political opinion had accepted the call for an increase in U.S. military strength. Thus, in the short term, we must conclude that Schlesinger's influence was indeed major. The long-term assessment of his policies, however, must await the judgment of later years. Our perspective is still too fresh, we are still too close to the events, to undertake that task now.⁴²

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Douglas Kinnard, Professor of Political Science at the University of Vermont, was a professional Army officer serving from World War II through the Indochinese war until his retirement in the rank of Brigadier

General. He was educated at the U.S. Military Academy and Princeton University, earning his Ph.D. degree from the latter. He has lectured and written widely and is author of *The War Managers*, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management: A Study in Defense Politics*, and the forthcoming *Five Secretaries of State* and *The Second Indochinese War*.

NOTES

I wish to acknowledge the great assistance on both the research for and development of this article by Franklin Miller when we were colleagues at the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, 1976, 1977.

1. Schlesinger was born in New York City in 1929. He holds B.A. and Ph.D. (Economics) degrees from Harvard. After teaching for a time at the University of Virginia he worked at RAND as a senior staff member until 1969. He was Assistant Director Bureau of the Budget and Office of Management and Budget from 1969-71. He was Chairman of the AEC from 1971-73 and Director CIA from early 1973 until he became Secretary of Defense in July of that year.

2. James R. Schlesinger, "A Testing Time for America," *Fortune*, February 1976, p. 77.

3. Schlesinger, as quoted in "Arming to Disarm in the Age of Detente," *Time*, 11 February 1974, p. 24.

4. James R. Schlesinger, "U.S. Defense and the International Situation," *Commander's Digest*, 14 March 1974, p. 5.

5. Interviews with F.J. West, Jerry W. Friedheim, and Joseph Laitin.

6. This office had been started by Secretary Laird in late 1971 to do comparative analysis of U.S. and Soviet military programs. The original motivation may have been to counter

Kissinger's net assessment activity within the National Security Council staff. Its formal origins

come as a result of an approved recommendation from the Report of Laird's Blue Ribbon Defense Panel of 1970.

7. The best single overview of Schlesinger's strategic nuclear policy review is Lynn E. Davis, *Limited Nuclear Options: Deterrence and the New American Doctrine*, Adelphi Papers, no. 121 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1976). Two interesting articles on the subject of revising nuclear doctrine written before the Schlesinger policy review was made public are Fred C. Ikle, "Can Nuclear Deterrence Last Out the Century?" *Foreign Affairs*, January 1973 and Wolfgang Panofsky, "The Mutual Hostage Relationship Between America and Russia," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1973. Other discussions of the new strategic plans include Colin Gray, "Rethinking Nuclear Strategy," *Orbis*, Winter 1974; Herbert Scoville, Jr., "Flexible Madness," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1974; Ted Greenwood and Michael Nacht, "The New Nuclear Debate: Sense or Nonsense," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1974; and Bernard S. Albert, "Constructive Counterpower," *Orbis*, Summer 1976.

8. James R. Schlesinger, Remarks to a Seminar, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, 30 November 1976. Excluding previous Pentagon bureaucratic study seems somewhat of an exaggeration. For a discussion of interest and planning for greater flexibility in nuclear weapons going back to the early days of the Nixon administration, see Davis, pp. 3, 4.

9. Schlesinger seminar statement cited above. For the substance of the debate concerning the new doctrine see Davis, pp. 9, 10.

10. Remarks by Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger at Overseas Writers Association Luncheon, Washington, D.C., 10 January 1974.

11. These remarks set off a wave of newspaper articles and editorials. It was evident from most of them that Schlesinger had not made his points clearly. Accordingly, he had to hold a news conference on 24 January to clarify his remarks.

12. James R. Schlesinger, *Annual Defense Department Report, Fiscal Year 1975* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1974), p. 35.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 5. The implementation of this new doctrine was relatively easy because it involved largely only the creation of the new flexible war plans. Additionally, the targeting mechanism of the *Minuteman III* missiles was modified so that each of those 550 weapons could be retargeted in 36 minutes. The modifications also allowed the entire *Minuteman* fleet to be completely retargeted in 24 hours. Both the doctrinal and software changes were completed well before Schlesinger departed from the Pentagon.

15. James R. Schlesinger, *Annual Defense Department Report, Fiscal Years 1976 and 1977* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., February 1975), pp. 1-13, 14.

16. James R. Schlesinger, "The Design of U.S. Forces." Lecture, Princeton University, 1 December 1976.

17. James R. Schlesinger, as quoted in U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1975* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1974), p. 317.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

19. James Schlesinger, "The Military Balance," *Newsweek*, 31 May 1976, p. 9.

20. Schlesinger, "U.S. Defense and the International Situation," p. 6.

21. John W. Finney, *The New York Times*, 27 September 1975, p. 10.

22. Both figures are in Fiscal Year 1972 dollars.

23. Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., *On Watch* (New York: Quadrangle, 1976), pp. 460, 461.

24. *The New York Times*, 6 February 1974, p. 17.

25. In 1972 dollars from \$67.8 billion to \$66.7 billion.

26. Schlesinger, as quoted in Robert A. Wright, "Prototype of B-1 Is Shown on Coast," *The New York Times*, 27 October 1974, p. 43.

27. Schlesinger, as quoted in *Miami (Florida) Herald*, 27 October 1974.

28. Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 320.

29. *Ibid.*

30. From \$66.7 billion to \$64.4 billion in 1972 dollars.

31. *The New York Times*, 24 November 1975, p. 1.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 14. Interview with F.J. West.

33. *The New York Times*, 4 November 1975, p. 24.

34. *The New York Times*, 24 November 1975, pp. 1, 14.

35. *The New York Times*, 6 November 1975, p. 14.

36. Schlesinger, *Annual Report FY 1976*, pp. 1-8.

37. David Binder, "Pentagon Voicing Doubt on Detente," *The New York Times*, 9 October 1975, p. 15.

38. Interviews with F.J. West, Jerry W. Friedheim, and Joseph Laitin.

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39. Up from \$64.4 billion to \$65.2 billion in 1972 dollars.

40. *The New York Times*, 5 November 1975, p. 21.

41. *The New York Times*, 4 November 1975, p. 26.

42. Also much of the documentation of that period remains classified and most of the memoirs have not yet been written. Kissinger's, for example, was not available at this writing. One additional point, the author has stressed the strategic policy-budgetary aspects of the Schlesinger incumbency as being central to understanding his efforts. Numerous other interesting and important issues could be examined in a full treatment of the period—not possible in a journal length article—such as: Schlesinger's relationships with the White House staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff; his interaction with the Navy over the carrier question; the resupply dialogue during the Yom Kippur war; and the standardization problem with NATO, to name just a few.

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