

worldwide incidence of murder; somewhere in the world someone is murdered every five minutes. Individual killings and wars on the largest scale are, he said, two ends of a continuum, an unbroken curve. It follows, not only in a trivial sense but also I believe in a very deep psychological sense, that war is murder writ large. When our well-being is threatened, when our illusions about ourselves are challenged, we tend—some of us at least—to fly into murderous rages. And when the same provocations are applied to nation states, they, too, sometimes fly into murderous rages, egged on often enough by those seeking personal power or profit. But as the technology of murder improves and the penalties of war increase, a great many people must be made to fly into murderous rages simultaneously for a major war to be mustered. Because the organs of mass communication are often in the hands of the state, this can commonly be arranged. (Nuclear war is the exception. It can be triggered by a very small number of people.)

We see here a conflict between our passions and what is sometimes called our better natures; between the deep, ancient reptilian part of the brain, the R-complex, in charge of murderous rages, and the more recently evolved mammalian and human parts of the brain, the limbic system and the cerebral cortex. When humans lived in small groups, when our weapons were comparatively paltry, even an enraged warrior could kill only a few. As our technology improved, the means of war also improved. In the same brief interval, *we* also have improved. We have tempered our anger, frustration and despair with reason. We have ameliorated on a planetary scale injustices that only recently were global and endemic. But our weapons can now kill billions. Have we improved fast enough? Are we teaching reason as effectively as we can? Have we courageously studied the causes of war?

What is often called the strategy of nuclear deterrence is remarkable for its reliance on the behavior of our nonhuman ancestors. Henry Kissinger, a contemporary politician, wrote: "Deterrence depends, above all, on psychological criteria. For purposes of deterrence, a bluff taken seriously is more useful than a serious threat interpreted as a bluff." Truly effective nuclear bluffing, however, includes occasional postures of irrationality, a distancing from the horrors of nuclear war. Then the potential enemy is tempted to submit on points of dispute rather than unleash a global confrontation, which the aura of irrationality has made plausible. The chief danger of adopting a credible pose of irrationality is that to succeed in the pretense you have to be very good. After a while, you get used to it. It becomes pretense no longer.

The global balance of terror, pioneered by the United States and the Soviet Union, holds hostage the citizens of the Earth. Each side draws limits on the permissible behavior of the other.