

THE FUTURE OF NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL

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August 1982

P-6804

### The Rand Paper Series

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The Rand Corporation  
Santa Monica, California 90406

## THE FUTURE OF NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL[1]

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The American people today are asking questions about how to limit the number of nuclear weapons, how to reduce them, and how to control their use. Indeed, many former government officials who worked for the ratification of the SALT II Treaty wonder where all these people were three years ago when it was being debated on the U.S. Senate floor.

Let me give a personal example of how intense these questions have become: Recently, I was speaking to a group about the problems of American-European relations and how they affect the NATO Alliance's ability to defend Western Europe. When I was finished, a woman came up to me and asked point blank why I was in favor of fighting a nuclear war. No amount of argument could persuade her that my interest in a strong defense of Europe did not translate into a desire for a nuclear war.

By profession, I think about the problems of our nation's defense. This means I must think about war, including nuclear war. But the purpose of this thinking is to prevent a war, not to have one. Peace is so preferable to war, especially to nuclear war, it is hard to imagine that anyone could be in favor of war, other than a lunatic. For that reason, such questions as that woman's are very disquieting.

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[1] This paper reproduces a speech made at a meeting of the New Frontiers and Futures Section of Town Hall of California, in Los Angeles, California on August 16, 1982.

In times like these, people like me are being asked many questions, by relatives, friends, acquaintances, and the general public. They want to know why the United States won't stop producing nuclear weapons, or freeze the number of them, or reduce them, or even throw them all away. Professional military men, government officials, nuclear weapons designers, and people who work in defense industries are fielding similar questions, which are sometimes posed in a confrontational way.

It is reasonable that these questions be asked and answered. A national debate on nuclear deterrence and arms control can be a healthy thing. People who are in the "nuclear war business," to use the phrase of Roger Molander, the executive director of the Ground Zero Organization, often speak in such abstractions that few can understand what they are talking about. Such terms as counterforce, countervalue, throw weight, equivalent megatons, assured destruction, and so forth, are tossed about in ways that make the subject of nuclear weapons incomprehensible and frightening. It is reasonable that professionals be asked to return to fundamentals and explain themselves in understandable ways.

But it is important that we start the discussion with the right fundamentals, with the right questions. There is too much talk today about the horrors of nuclear war and the levels of nuclear weapons inventories. Although these are important issues, there is not enough talk about what could cause war and how we can keep the peace. Those are the right questions.

Nuclear arms control proposals should be judged by what contribution they will make to the peace. The nuclear arms control debate is

fastened on numbers--how many there are, who has more, whether there's a balance, how far we should reduce, and so forth. It is often asserted that a limit on the number of nuclear weapons--any limit--will help keep world peace. This has been the traditional argument of arms controllers throughout this century, but it has not proved to be historically valid. Also, it is conceivable that some kinds of limits could make war more likely in the future. And too much of a focus on the number of armaments can cause us to forget the principal task--keeping the peace.

#### THE STRUCTURE OF PEACE

Before talking about arms control, I think it is necessary to review the current structure of peace. On this excursion, I plan to introduce you to one of the defense planner's arcane concepts--extended deterrence.

As a nation, we are not interested solely in peace per se. Obviously, we would not want a peace that would allow other nations to dictate policy to us. We want a peace that maintains our vital interests. These include the survival of our peoples and of our way of government.

In the structure of peace that the United States has fostered since the end of World War II, we have defined our vital interests to include the security of regions far from our shores. We learned important lessons from history.

After the armies stopped rolling at the end of World War II and the Soviets consolidated their hold over Eastern Europe, the United States determined that further expansion of Soviet power in Europe would

threaten American security, just as the expansion of German power had threatened American security twice before in this century. The NATO Alliance was born and we committed ourselves to defending the territory and peoples of Western Europe.

Our commitments to defend Northeast Asia, especially Japan and Korea, grew out of similar concerns about the necessity to contain the expansion of Soviet power.

We recently added a third set of commitments far from our shores. In January 1980, President Carter declared that free access to Persian Gulf oil is vital to the security of the United States, and that attempts by a hostile power to gain control over it would be met by American military force, if necessary. The need to defend the security of the Gulf arose because of U.S. concerns that the security of our two traditional strategic zones--Western Europe and Northeast Asia--could be undermined should the Soviet Union gain control over Persian Gulf oil.

What this amounts to is a structure of peace for the United States that depends upon U.S. protection of three regions around the rim of the Soviet Union--Western Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf. I do not plan to spend time justifying this structure. That would be the subject of a longer talk. Suffice it to say that I believe it is sensible and that we will want to maintain it until the Soviet Union changes its world view and ceases to pose a threat to peace. I do not intend to debate the nature of the Soviet Union, either. That, too, would be the subject of a longer talk.

THE ROLE OF DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENTS

In the nuclear age, the primary purpose of our defense establishment must be deterrence--the prevention of war. History tells us that peace breaks down and wars begin when the interests of nations collide and when one nation feels that the risks of war are outweighed by the potential gains. The defense planning game is played to make sure that the Soviets never believe that the risks of attacking the three strategic zones are low. For the gains of such attacks would be high for the Soviets.

By now, someone in the audience is asking, Why would the Soviets want to attack those places anyway, since it would be difficult to maintain military occupation over all that territory? I, too, doubt that the Soviets would want to attack. But I believe the Soviets would prefer that those regions be under some form of Soviet control, which can be achieved short of military attack and occupation. One way to do so is to convince the peoples of those regions, or to convince us, that defense against a Soviet attack is unlikely to succeed, whether that attack seems improbable or not. War is then not necessary for the Soviets because the threat of military action is enough to cause accommodation. In our defense planning jargon, we call these virtual wars-- wars that don't actually occur, but the expectation of the probable outcome brings about that outcome. Deterrence needs to work against virtual wars, too.

THE ROLE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Our defense commitments pose a difficult defense problem for the United States. The prospective enemy, the Soviet Union, has large conventional forces. At my last count, there were between 170 and 180 Soviet ground force divisions. (By way of comparison, we have 28, although ours are bigger and better, and we have stronger allies.) In time of war, the Soviets can operate on what defense planners call "internal lines of communications," which means they can shift their divisions from one military theater to another over relatively short land distances. We must send our forces over quite long sea and air distances to Europe, the Persian Gulf, and Northeast Asia. These differences in distance, combined with the large numerical superiority of Soviet conventional forces over our forces and those of our allies, makes the problem of mounting a successful conventional defense in all these areas at one time exceedingly difficult.

This is not a new problem. The United States has faced it in varying forms since the end of World War II. The problem has become more difficult over time as Soviet forces have improved and our own commitments have multiplied to include the Persian Gulf. To deal with this problem, the United States and its allies made an important choice in the late 1940s and early 1950s that we have all lived with ever since. Rather than build the kind of conventional forces that would be needed to contain Soviet power around its rim, we decided to have nuclear weapons to make up the difference. Even today, the United States threatens to use nuclear weapons at some undefined point in a conflict with the USSR. The threat of nuclear use, even if the enemy has



not used nuclear weapons, thus helps deter conflict and maintain the peace. Our nuclear forces not only deter nuclear attack on our own country, but also deter both nuclear and conventional attacks in such other areas as Western Europe. This is called "extended deterrence."

In short, we have bought peace on the cheap: Nuclear forces are vastly cheaper than conventional forces. Although there are growing problems with this structure of peace, which I'll come to, it has been quite a good deal for the United States and its allies. Nuclear deterrence has worked for 35 years, war has not broken out with the Soviet Union, our interests have been protected, and this has all been accomplished while defense spending has been low as a proportion of our national income, thereby permitting great economic advancement and improvement in the standard of living of our citizens, and of European and Japanese citizens as well.

Our nuclear reliance certainly explains why our government behaves with great caution when suggestions are made to renounce the first use of weapons, to disarm unilaterally, or to reduce the number of nuclear weapons sharply.

I am making a big deal out of this point, which may seem obvious to many of you, because the debate on strategic arms control in the United States is remarkably devoid of understanding of extended deterrence and of the nuclear force requirements it imposes upon us.

The debate often proceeds as though the United States and the Soviet Union were the only two nations on earth, each on its own continent. If this were the case, deterring an attack on each other would be an easy task! We could have enough nuclear weapons to survive a

Soviet nuclear strike against our nuclear forces and then blow the Soviets up. And the Soviets could have enough nuclear weapons to survive a strike by us and then blow us up. Both sides would then be deterred and peace would be maintained. It wouldn't take very many nuclear weapons to do this either, since we could destroy about 70 percent of Soviet industry with about 200 one-megaton nuclear weapons if we wanted to target in a way that would do that and they didn't do anything to protect themselves. Probably a few submarines carrying multiple war-head missiles could do the job. This situation of mutual vulnerability is often referred to as mutual assured destruction--a concept that seems to be behind many of the strategic arms control proposals that one hears so often. The proposals usually begin with something like, "since we can blow each other up 23 times," and then go on to propose sharp reductions in our nuclear forces.

#### THE EXTENDED DETERRENCE PROBLEM

But the extended deterrence problem is a lot harder than just maintaining the situation of mutual assured destruction. The credibility of a deterrent threat figures heavily in the nuclear force debate. I will use the term credibility many times in the rest of this talk. The threats of massive attacks I just described would not be credible and would not extend deterrence. In this case, what I mean is that the Soviets would find it hard to believe that we would carry out an all-out attack on Soviet cities in the event of a Soviet conventional force attack on, say, Europe, because the Soviets would then attack U.S.

cities. If the threat is not credible, it will not help deter, and peace will not be served in the long run.

On the American side, the history of the so-called nuclear arms race has been dominated by a desire to maintain the credibility of extended deterrence. Our nuclear forces have grown and changed in ways designed to ensure that we have "credible" nuclear response options to a variety of possible Soviet attacks--conventional or nuclear, big or small. This strategy is sometimes called flexible response.

This brings me to the limited nuclear war issue. It seems that today the only thing more dastardly than wanting to fight a nuclear war is wanting to fight a limited nuclear war. President Reagan was practically pilloried in the press for suggesting, however inelegantly, that a limited nuclear war was conceivable to him.

Let me be clear that I am in favor of planning for limited nuclear operations. Such plans--and the forces to back them up--are necessary to provide the credible response options that I just discussed; these are needed for extended deterrence, which is necessary to keep the peace. They are also necessary to give us the chance to get out of a war short of a holocaust. I cannot believe that the American people want their President to have only two choices in the event a Soviet attack threatens to overrun Europe--accept defeat or undertake a massive nuclear attack on the Soviet Union. I think they would rather that he had some intermediate steps available in the hope that those steps might cause the Soviets to reconsider any escalation track they would be on and end the war before it got totally out of hand.

I know that someone out there is saying that once even a single nuclear weapon is used, it will lead willy-nilly to all-out nuclear war. I wonder how he knows that. I don't know that, nor do I know that nuclear war could be kept limited. Nobody knows, because mercifully we haven't had one. That is the paradox of extended deterrence, flexible response, and limited nuclear options. On the one hand, plans for limited nuclear options strengthen deterrence precisely because they could lead to all-out nuclear war. On the other hand, they could make it possible to end the war before Armageddon.

Thus, the demands on our nuclear forces are quite high. We (at least I) want the President to have lots of options for nuclear strikes, not just an all-out attack on Soviet cities. And our forces should be survivable enough that the Soviets can't take most of his options away. And he ought to be able to strike Soviet military forces, not just Soviet cities. Research into Soviet defense thinking shows that the Soviets value their military forces highly. Threatening to strike those forces will therefore add substantially to deterrence and is more credible, not to say more moral, than threatening to destroy Soviet cities.

What I am telling you is that extended deterrence adds up to a lot of nuclear weapons.

#### NUCLEAR FORCE NEEDS

Today the struggle to maintain the credibility of extended deterrence has reached an important pass. I want to highlight two aspects that I feel are of the greatest importance.

First, we need to put missiles in Europe that can reach the Soviet Union. As Soviet capabilities to attack the United States have grown steadily, it has become less and less credible that the United States would use home-based forces to attack the USSR in the early stages of a war in Europe. With the advent of a powerful Soviet theater nuclear force capability, including SS-20 missiles, fears have grown in Europe and the United States that the Soviets could carry out nuclear strikes from Soviet territory against NATO forces, but that the only response option available to NATO would be intercontinental strikes from the United States. The Soviets might not consider that very credible. To block this credibility gap, NATO has proposed a modest deployment of new missiles intended only as a gap filler, not as a numerical match for the entire Soviet theater nuclear force. Because the missiles will be mobile, they will be survivable.

Second, we need a survivable intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force. The Soviets now have, or soon will have, the ability to destroy almost our entire ICBM force. But ICBMs have a combination of unique characteristics making them more suited than bombers or submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) to the problems of extended deterrence. The President can be more sure of communicating with them, they can be more easily targeted to take account of a changing military situation, they can be sent to their targets swiftly, they can strike targets with great accuracy, and they can be launched singly or in small groups. All these characteristics are important for the limited nuclear employment plans that support the extended deterrence concept.

It may be that in the long run, our SLBM and bomber forces can be improved to the point that they, too, will have this same unique combination of characteristics. And some steps are planned in this direction. But the long run is not here yet. Until it arrives--if it ever does--we will need a survivable ICBM force.

The domestic opposition in Europe to NATO's missile plan and the difficulty of finding a survivable basing scheme for the M-X ICBM that is domestically acceptable raises the frightening spectre of a Soviet ground force assault on Europe, followed by precise nuclear strikes designed to disarm NATO's unmodernized nuclear forces, to destroy the Minuteman ICBM force, and to disrupt communications between the United States and NATO forces. This would leave the President with no options that would hold any hope of controlling escalation and of blunting the Soviet attack on Europe. His only choice would be to launch our bomber and SLBM forces in a massive strike on the Soviet Union. Would he really want to do that, knowing that the Soviets could respond in kind? Is that a credible response option? If the answer is no, extended deterrence will be badly undermined if we fail to deploy the new missiles in Europe and find a good way to base the M-X.

#### CONVENTIONAL FORCE NEEDS

Although I believe that the United States must take steps to shore up the credibility of extended deterrence, it is an uphill battle. Clearly, the credibility of nuclear use to counter Soviet conventional attack is declining as Soviet nuclear capability continues to grow.

Clearly, our ability to defend the three strategic zones with conventional forces looms larger in deterrence. I believe almost everyone would agree that it would be preferable in the abstract if the President could have more credible conventional defense options to blunt a Soviet attack than options for early resort to nuclear weapons.

The need for strengthened conventional forces poses unpleasant choices to ourselves and our allies because--unlike nuclear forces--conventional forces are not cheap. Programs that would provide the needed jumps in U.S. and allied conventional defense capabilities would make the M-X, B-1, and Trident strategic modernization programs look like bargains. But it is not a hopeless task: We can be more efficient, we can ask our allies to do more, we can use technology better, and we can be more clever in thinking about how we plan to use our forces. Nevertheless, we will need steady growth in the share of our national resources allocated to defense spending, placing greater strain on national income and squeezing programs for domestic spending yet further, if we are to reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons.

#### THE FUTURE OF NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL

What does all this say about arms control's future? Let me address both the near and long term.

In the near term, we need to agree with the Soviets on a framework for restraining and reducing the magnitude of the strategic arms competition. This would be useful for two reasons. First, it would provide a sense of stability and predictability to the U.S.-Soviet stra-

tegic relationship. Second, it might offer the prospect for a modest transfer of funds from nuclear to conventional force programs.

Not just any framework will do, however. We need an arms limitation agreement that will foster extended deterrence. The current U.S. proposals in Geneva are aimed approximately in this direction.

In the so-called Intermediate Range Nuclear Force talks, we are trying to reduce the recently increased Soviet theater nuclear force threat, especially the SS-20--one of the problems that caused NATO to decide on the new missiles in the first place.

In the START talks, the U.S. proposals are aimed at restricting the number of Soviet missile warheads, especially ICBM warheads. It is the Soviet acquisition of a large number of highly accurate warheads on their ICBMs that has led to the ICBM vulnerability problem.

But I must be candid and say that those who are hoping for early progress on these proposals are likely to be disappointed. Perhaps better than most Americans, the Soviets understand our extended deterrence problems. Their goal in the talks will be to exacerbate the problems, thereby leading to a long-term decline in confidence in U.S. ability to defend the areas around the Soviet rim. This goal probably was one of the motivations of President Brezhnev when he said that the various freeze proposals "go in the right direction," since a freeze would prevent the United States from shoring up extended deterrence. Hard bargaining will be necessary to move the Soviets toward our position. This will certainly be made harder if we fail to deploy the new missiles in Europe and the M-X ICBM in the United States.



Other issues are certain to arise in the talks, such as Soviet desire to limit United States bombers and cruise missiles, and in a later stage of the talks a U.S. desire to limit missile "throw weight," which would make it difficult for the Soviets to add missile warheads quickly and thus "break out" of a warhead agreement.

But what of the longer term future for nuclear arms control? Will it be more of the same, or can we expect some drastic changes? It is risky to predict the future, but it does seem to me that at least two areas of potential technological advance could begin to alter the nature of our extended deterrence problem. If this in fact occurs, it may open new opportunities for, and require new approaches to, nuclear arms control.

First is the area of defenses against nuclear attack. We and the Soviets are almost totally vulnerable today, and the 1972 ABM Treaty enshrines the vulnerability to missile attack. But defense technology has advanced somewhat since then, and many defense enthusiasts believe that more large advances are possible in the future. For example, the Heritage Foundation has produced a report that calls for a massive national program to defend ourselves and our allies from nuclear attack with technologically advanced systems based in space. The technological claims of the defense enthusiasts need to be scrutinized carefully and critically. But if they are even half correct, the implications for our strategy of deterrence could be enormous. They could include a great reduction in the role of offensive nuclear forces in deterrence, permitting deep reductions in those forces in arms control.

The second area of possible technological advance is conventional weapons technology. Conventional weapons are growing more accurate, munitions more effective, and so forth. It is possible that in the future conventional weapons will be able to destroy military targets that are now susceptible only to nuclear attack. It is also possible that we can find and destroy ground force units that we cannot expect to destroy today with conventional or nuclear forces. These changes, too, could have far-reaching implications for the structure of deterrence and might make possible sharp reductions in certain categories of offensive nuclear forces.

#### CONCLUSION

I hope that I have left one important message with you today: That the postwar security framework that has kept the peace for 35 years depends on nuclear weapons. The United States and its allies are heavily reliant on nuclear weapons for their security, more so than our adversaries. This means that the U.S. approach to arms control must be one of caution. It does not mean that progress is not possible, but it will be hard slogging because of the differences between U.S. and Soviet interests.

I know that this may not be a welcome message at a time when some people are clamoring for freezes, reductions, and the like. But such people must face the policy consequences of their desire for a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons--strengthened conventional forces and still more money spent on defense. If a national consensus on such a policy can be forged out of the current debate, the debate will have been worth it.

RAND/P-6804

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