

THE ARMS CONTROL CHALLENGE TO THE ALLIANCE

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Now that the superpowers have reached an agreement in principle on the double zero solution to the problem of intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF), it is timely for the NAA to take up this theme. In Europe attention is now turning to the next phase of arms control--especially the issues of short-range nuclear forces (the SNF) and of conventional forces. In the United States, the focus is already shifting toward strategic forces and space and defensive systems.

But these issues must be seen in a larger context--the context of Western security policy. And when I speak of security policy, I refer specifically to its military dimension. One of the political realities of our times is that security policy is increasingly subordinate to arms control policy. It is now commonplace to hear Western politicians, both left and right, say that arms control has become a "precondition" to moving forward with defense programs. Twenty years ago, arms control would scarcely be mentioned in political debates about security policy. Now, it seems the dominant topic.

Arms control is out in front of security policy, rather than the other way 'round. Many Western politicians have concluded that votes can be gained from an arms control stance that appears forthcoming; and lost from one that does not. Domestic politics is a necessary element of any security policy. But politics works in two directions in

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democracies--the people inform the leaders of their views and the leaders lead the people. Some leaders seem to have forgotten the second direction. Their decisions are often driven by their assessments of what will go down favorably with the public, rather than by what is needed for security. And, I'm not even convinced that their assessments are entirely correct.

With domestic politics the paramount concern, arms control is working at cross purposes to our current Alliance security policy. It has become part of a general political trend weakening the security consensus in the West.

The arms control challenge for the Alliance is, first and foremost, to recreate a viable security concept and rally public support around it. This needs to be done soon, before the small amount of damage that has been done so far is multiplied and the security and solidarity of the Alliance threatened. It is this solidarity that is the most vital element of deterrence. Only when the Alliance has recreated its security consensus will our leaders be able to lead public opinion to support a sound arms control policy--one that is an integral part of a broader Western security policy, featuring political, military and economic measures, not only arms control.

Unfortunately this need has become clear at a time when political leadership on both sides of the Atlantic has been weakened, most importantly in my own country. This situation will not be fully clarified until after a new American administration has become firmly established--about two years from now. But, we need to start now--to recognize our problems, to do the needed analysis, to inject it into the public debate, and--most important of all--to deal with the

energetic new leadership in the Kremlin. Mr. Gorbachev will not wait until mid-1989. We can expect new Soviet arms control initiatives. I do not rule out the possibility that some will be promising from our point of view, but I am sure that some will not. Unless we recognize our situation now, the West will find itself more and more on the political defensive--reacting to Soviet proposals, reacting to a public mood, which we may or may not correctly understand, and without a guiding security concept.

We all should recognize the essence of the military dimension of the security concept that has guided us for nearly 40 years. Because of the Soviet Union's geographical position and the enormous size of its army, that army poses the chief threat to Western security, especially to the Federal Republic of Germany. To offset that, the West has relied on the threat of America's nuclear weapons. Of course, it's more complicated than this, but not too much more complicated. It sometimes amazes me how often the essence of our security concept is forgotten.

Many in the West, however, fully understand this concept and are uncomfortable with it. Nuclear weapons are horrid, fearsome--that is their deterrent strength and political weakness. And many have been searching for a way out of this nuclear dilemma. In my opinion, one has not been found. All the suggested alternatives have greater political, military, technical or financial problems than the current concept. This includes some of the most recent popular notions, whether they be strategic defenses or their intellectual brother--"defensive defenses," which have become a topic of political discussion in a few NATO countries.

There is no alternative to living with the nuclear dilemma until the USSR changes its political system completely. Until and unless that happens, we have to stick to the essence of our existing security concept.

The Soviet achievement of nuclear parity with the United States has undermined that concept somewhat, without question. Clearly, this has been a long-standing Soviet goal. Ever since this was anticipated, the prime goal of Alliance defense efforts has been to bolster the **credibility** of our nuclear threats--the credibility as seen by our opponent. This is the essence of NATO's flexible response doctrine. It has had many consequences--the 1979 INF deployment decision is perhaps the most well-known. Strategic nuclear doctrine and force structure have been altered too, to give us more credible options--including shifting our intended targets away from population centers to military targets and providing greater capability for precise and more discriminate attack. Perhaps the most important element of credibility, however, is conventional force strength, especially the presence of American troops in Europe. Unfortunately, the conventional strength has never been increased in response to the flexible response doctrine. But the American troops remain, fortunately--in larger numbers than 10 years ago.

Now, let us ask the question of how our arms control policy has worked to support the essence of our security policy: **It really has not.**

First, arms control has done nothing about the Soviet conventional force threat to Western Europe--the threat from which the Alliance's nuclear needs spring. The Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) talks have dragged on without result. The biggest failure of our arms control policy is to have negotiated nuclear constraints without having done anything about the main security problem--the conventional force imbalance in Europe.

Second, arms control has worked to limit efforts to increase the credibility of our nuclear threats--without, of course, having any impact on the Soviet achievement of nuclear parity. Nuclear parity is the reason we need the more credible nuclear employment options. Arms control cannot realistically be expected to reverse the Soviet achievement of nuclear parity.

How has arms control limited our options to improve credibility?

The most obvious way is the zero INF option. In essence, we have removed a nuclear threat option--to attack Soviet territory from European soil. We created this option because of Soviet conventional strength and Soviet achievement of nuclear parity with the United States. And, those are the things that we either have done or can do nothing about.

I don't want to belittle the achievement of the zero option, or spend a lot of time crying over spilt milk. The elimination of the SS-20 is an achievement, undeniably. But it does not really change the situation--the Soviets can still threaten Western Europe in many ways, with both conventional and nuclear forces. For example, they could simply add enough SS-24s to cover the SS-20 target base. But our threat to them from European soil would be effectively eliminated.

But, this by itself--although bad--is not awful. The West still has lots of nuclear weapons in Europe, has lots of nuclear options in its strategic forces, and that bastion of credibility--American troops in the heart of Europe--is still there.

The problem is the **trend**. In ways unmatched by any Soviet leader before him, Mr. Gorbachev seems to understand the essence of the Western security concept and to be both willing and able to overrule his military, with their instinct to hold on to what they have. He seems to understand that once the Soviets have achieved nuclear parity with the United States, they might just as well trade their nuclear weapons for ours. The effect of neutralizing our strategy is at least the same and probably greater than if they kept the nuclear weapons. And it is certainly cheaper.

This is the problem with the second zero in the "double zero" solution. It is quite true that the Soviets give up far more nuclear weapons than we. The problem is the momentum and political expectations this creates. Having said yes once, and then twice, to the idea of eliminating a category of nuclear weapons, how would leaders explain saying no to Mr. Gorbachev the third, fourth or fifth time? This is why the lack of political consensus and leadership on our security concept is so critical. Our leaders could not explain a "No" today.

My fear then is that we are on the road to the denuclearization of Europe through progressive zero options. I expect Mr. Gorbachev to propose them, so long as his political base in the Soviet Union remains firm. This will probably start with a third zero option on short range nuclear forces, and move by an inevitable logic to air-delivered nuclear weapons in Europe, and so forth.

But, I'm sure, even if we find ourselves at that point, many would say not to worry, there are still the American troops and the American strategic forces, with all their capabilities and options. But something must be said about these too.

I do not share the fears of many of my compatriots that the American troops would inevitably follow U.S. nuclear weapons out of Europe. But I also cannot rule this out. Certainly the removal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe would spawn a domestic political argument that American troops should not stay in Europe without nuclear protection. In my view, this argument has little strategic or political merit, but it could become a telling political argument at a time when there are many other pressures on the American troop presence in Europe.

With respect to the American strategic forces, the trends are not entirely positive either, and arms control policy is again playing a somewhat negative role. It is true that the U.S. strategic modernization program is well under way and--aside from the Midgetman mobile Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)--its completion seems assured. However, financial pressures may cause delays.

In the Geneva Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), the two sides are close to an accord on the so-called 50 percent-reduction package--or ceilings at around 6,000 warheads. Details concerning the sub-limits on the most destabilizing weapons--the ICBM warheads--remain to be worked out. But, the differences between the sides are fairly minor and probably could be cleared up quickly if the Soviets wanted to do so. Whether they will or not depends mainly on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) issue.

But what would this agreement actually accomplish? Not much, really. It will enhance stability by reducing the vulnerability of the U.S. strategic forces. But it turns out that the strategic modernization program--especially the stealth bomber and the Midgetman mobile ICBM--make a far greater contribution to reduced vulnerability than the prospective START agreement. The bottom line is: with modernization, arms control helps reduce vulnerability; without modernization, it does very little for us.

The prospective agreement's most important contribution has nothing to do with the actual numbers, but with the simple fact of the warhead ceilings and the predictability they introduce into the nuclear competition. They also, I might add, make the SS-24 retargeting option, which I just mentioned, more difficult and make the INF agreement more viable.

On the other side of the coin, the reduction of U.S. strategic forces to 6,000 warheads could begin to have a modest effect on the credibility of nuclear employment options. Now, 6,000 is a whole lot of nuclear weapons. But more credible options, especially those involving strikes on military targets instead of civilian centers, require a lot of weapons. Probably, with the modernization program, 6,000 weapons will be adequate. But I can't rule out the possibility that a debate about the future adequacy of our strategic deterrent could follow a 6,000 weapon START deal. This would especially be so if part of the modernization program were to fail. In the past, when Americans have debated the adequacy of their nuclear deterrent, European governments have started to get worried.

What I am saying is that the trend to reduce the number of American strategic nuclear weapons could also become inconsistent with our security policy. This will especially be true if the next phase of strategic arms control leads in either of two directions--further reductions of nuclear weapons or a breakdown of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.

At Reykjavik the two leaders made further reductions of nuclear weapons their goal. Although what they actually discussed remains murky, they apparently talked about elimination of whole categories of nuclear weapons. The American administration subsequently said that elimination of ballistic missiles was its long-term goal. Naturally, this is consistent with the trend to more and more categories of "zeros" in Europe. But, one might ask, what does this have to do with our security policy?

An ABM treaty breakdown would have consequences similar to a move toward zero ballistic missiles. The more effective ABM systems become, the less effective ballistic missiles become. The problem here is Soviet, not U.S., ABM systems, because Soviet systems reduce the effectiveness of our ballistic missiles. Yet, the ABM treaty is now in question because of the debates over Soviet ABM treaty violations, over the correct interpretation of the treaty, and over the early deployment option for SDI.

Thus, the direction of Western arms control policy has been toward sharp reductions of nuclear weapons and elimination of whole classes of nuclear weapons, potentially leading to total reliance on air-delivered nuclear weapons. And given the political momentum toward zeros, not to

say the overall Soviet strategy in the same direction, there is no guarantee that the air-delivered weapons would not also be sharply cut or eliminated.

The entire trend is out of step with our security policy.

What should be done now? One is tempted to say that the entire arms control process ought to be halted until we get our security policy in order. But that is politically unrealistic.

If there is to be a continuation of the East-West arms control process, we should insist that it concentrate on conventional forces, and seek to set the nuclear force issue aside for a while. The MBFR talks are at an end. Talks are under way in Vienna to agree on a mandate for new negotiations on conventional "stability" in the area from the Atlantic to the Urals. These new talks provide opportunities and challenges. But the Alliance is woefully unprepared to exploit the opportunities and manage the challenges. Because of an extended Franco-American dispute about procedural issues, the West does not have a concept for the new talks, which could begin early in 1988.

Most importantly, it lacks a concept that would link the Alliance's conventional arms control position to its defense programs. This is a difficult job because the Alliance lacks a clear statement of its conventional defense needs and has no program to meet them. Such a program cannot be slapped together overnight. It could take a year or two to do it. This should be a high priority and a "precondition" to the conventional arms control talks. To bring it off, the Alliance must take steps to improve its defense and armaments planning processes.

There also needs to be realistic expectations about what conventional arms control can accomplish. It cannot be expected to eliminate our conventional needs. That is why we should have a conventional defense improvement program. Analysis that we have done recently at RAND indicates that sizable and highly asymmetric cuts will be needed to even moderate our defense needs--the equivalent of three or four NATO divisions traded against the reduction of 18 to 24 Pact divisions in Eastern Europe and the adjacent areas in the Western USSR. Smaller reductions, even if highly asymmetric--for example, one U.S. division for six Soviet--will do nothing to reduce our defense needs and could even be harmful. Less asymmetric cuts--such as four NATO divisions for 12 Pact or the sort of equal percentage cuts that the Soviets would probably propose--would seriously worsen NATO's conventional defense situation. The basic reason for all this is that the Alliance is dangerously short of conventional forces for the protection of the Central Front and the Warsaw Pact has a great excess for offensive action. This is why we need to sharply cut the offensive conventional capability of the Pact, starting with deep cuts in tanks and artillery--mainly on the Pact side.

Because the West should make very demanding proposals, negotiation on conventional forces can be expected to be long and tedious. Politicians must be prepared for this. But if there is to be an arms control policy that supports our security policy, this is where we need to focus, while we set aside the nuclear issues, both in Europe and in the strategic force realm.

My German friends tell me that negotiations on the short-range nuclear forces are politically necessary for Germany. We have all heard the statement, "the shorter the range, the deader the Germans." I hope this is not true. But if we must negotiate on them, let us **not** do so in a separate nuclear negotiating forum. This will only invite a third zero offer from Mr. Gorbachev. Better to integrate nuclear forces into the negotiations on conventional forces, so that nuclear reductions can be linked to conventional reductions. Just as nuclear needs are linked to conventional needs in the Alliance's security policy.

In closing, I have not come with news of wonderful opportunities for arms control in the years ahead. In a sense, we should be reaching an end of the road. And the new road will be much tougher to travel. Arms control has truly become more of a challenge for the Alliance than an opportunity. The current enthusiasm about arms control should be dampened, something that can only be done by political leaders. Only then can arms control be reintegrated with security policy and be fruitfully pursued in the years ahead.

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