

Slowing and Reversing the Strategic Arms Race: Some Possible Initiatives

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In the pages of the *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* and other journals, we have seen a remarkably diverse and original range of proposals that might help to slow down or reverse the Soviet-American arms race. For reasons too numerous and complex to reiterate here, little progress has been made. On the contrary, we now find ourselves in a particularly frantic and extremely dangerous phase of this long and costly competition in strategic weapons. It may be, however, that political reason is more likely to return when things look most menacing, and that today's sorry state of affairs will itself help to stimulate more rational and prudent behavior on the part of the super powers. In this brief note, let me itemize a number of initiatives that could (and should) be taken by one or both of those regimes, after first making explicit certain of the more relevant assumptions from which these proposals flow.

Some strategic assumptions

Despite some mischievous and ill-informed suggestions to the contrary, there is no doubt that what we have here is a full-fledged arms race, going back to the 1940s. By this, I mean that a large part of the driving force behind each side's military procurement is the type and quantity of the other's. There is no question that an arms race in the industrial age also requires a great deal of *domestic amplification* – and much of my proposal here will address

that problem – but there must also be a genuine adversary who has threatening capabilities and apparently hostile intentions. Similarly, there must be within both societies such a distribution of power – economic and political – that it is more 'natural' to exaggerate the other side's capabilities and belligerence than to estimate these elements accurately. This propensity toward 'worst-case analysis' may be an inherent part of all national states, but it requires a fair amount of time and *some* degree of evidence before it becomes the dominant viewpoint, and advocates of self-correcting policies become overwhelmed by those who advocate self-amplifying foreign and military policies.

In addition, then, to the assumption that the super powers are in a bona fide arms race – as well as an enduring rivalry – there is the equally crucial assumption that both societies are less secure today than when the arms race began. Both may even be in greater jeopardy than at any previous time, including perhaps the Soviet Union when it was dramatically inferior to the US in strategic capabilities. This increased jeopardy comes, as I see it, from: a) the technological innovations that have been pursued and applied; and b) from the strategic doctrines that have been adopted in response to the changing weapons technology. Under the first category, we have in mind such 'improvements' as accuracy and range of delivery vehicles, miniaturization and yield of warheads, and perhaps most de-stabilizing of all, development of the MIRV and MARV

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multiple warhead capability.

As if these innovations were not dangerous enough in themselves, both the US and the USSR have gradually succumbed to the targeting temptations that they offer. No one would suggest that a doctrine of mutual assured destruction is a rational or humanly acceptable basis for national security, but compared to the alternatives that have been gradually embraced by the increasingly powerful 'hawks' in both societies, MAD now looks like the epitome of reason and prudence. That is, we now see these two governments opting for highly provocative and de-stabilizing strategies under such terms as 'damage-limiting', war-fighting, flexible response, and counter-force capabilities. Briefly put, as each side's land based missile systems become more vulnerable via the application of the new technologies, each amplified that danger – in the name of nullifying it – by also increasing the number of such systems, either on their own territories or on that of allies. Today, each side's nuclear arsenal has a much weaker deterrent-to-provocation ratio than at any time in the past, and the situation is clearly getting worse.

A third assumption that is critical to the analysis presented here is that the Western powers and the US in particular have responded to the Soviet strategic build up in the least adaptive manner. In order to deter a possible Soviet adventure in Europe and to provide reassurance to the allies, the US could have pushed for some modest improvements in the size, firepower, and organization of NATO's conventional capabilities. But persuaded that conscription would be unacceptable in the US (a very dubious premise, given the steady support of about 60 vs 35 percent opposed in the opinion polls to some type of draft), that similar efforts would be opposed in Western Europe, and that theatre nuclear delivery systems stationed there would be an assuring sign of the American commitment, the West has gone for the most de-stabilizing response to the putative Soviet threat.

Some socio-political assumptions

Shifting now from the military to the domestic

social scene, let me articulate several additional assumptions. The first of these is that both the Soviet and American regimes are already in serious trouble at home, along with their declining prestige and influence abroad. Neither regime is meeting the basic needs of large sectors of the respective societies, and as the economic, ethnic, and quality of life problems get more severe, there will be increasingly vigorous demands for attention and resources. And we will probably see more opinion leaders and political officials begin to support, in public as well as in private, these demands. Clearly, the guns versus butter issue is becoming more and more salient throughout the world, and in such diverse societies as the USA and USSR, not to mention the Third and Fourth worlds.

Furthermore, I assume that military spending – especially on strategic systems – is economically detrimental to both societies. It is not only inflationary for all the obvious reasons but it also inhibits industrial research and development, productivity, quality control, and effective competition in the export market. To the extent that journalists, scholars, and politicians become aware of the economic consequences of strategic arms spending, they can be expected to advocate measures that might reduce that spending.

Finally, all sorts of indicators suggest that the attentive publics in East and West Europe, North America, and perhaps in the USSR are increasingly aware of both the increasing probability of nuclear war and the physical consequences. Opinion surveys show as many as 70% believing that such a war is likely in the next five years, and the growing resistance to civil defense programs, fallout shelters, and evacuation plans suggests an awareness that passive defense systems are a deceptive fraud. About two years ago, in this connection, the American CIA released its report on Soviet civil defense, indicating that it would be no more effective in protecting the general public (as distinct from the top political elites) than would the US system, further weakening support for that program at home.

In sum, public and elite concern over the

strategic arms race is clearly on the rise in many parts of the world, and resistance seems to be growing apace. This, then, creates an opportunity and an incentive for some new initiatives designed to slow down and reverse this vertical – and thus, horizontal – proliferation of nuclear weapon capabilities. Space limitations preclude full articulation here, and I therefore end this brief essay with a simple listing of some useful initiatives that might be taken not only by one or both super powers, but by their allies and by the governments of the non-aligned states as well.

Some critical initiatives

1. US should accept the oft-urged SU commitment to 'no first use' of *any* nuclear weapons, beginning if need be with strategic and theater, expanding commitment to tactical as NATO conventional forces are improved. A joint US-SU declaration the preferred vehicle.
2. Accompany (and/or precede) such declaration with a serious educational program clarifying the advantages and dangers of no-first-use doctrine.
3. Begin first phase of dismantling US land-based ICBMs (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles), including a freeze on MX (highly accurate ICBM) production and deployment.
4. If not previously negotiated, encourage SU to emulate US phase-out process, even if at slower pace (given their greater 'reliance' on landbased systems). Seek negotiated schedule, preferably extending to air-launched and sea-launched warheads in that order.
5. As part of the strategic phase-out, US should offer to sell several older SLBM (Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles) systems to SU, to give them approximate parity in terms of survivable and essentially retaliatory capacity.
6. Propose freeze on theater nuclear-tipped missiles, but retain air launched (including carrier forces) until negotiations concluded and missile phase-out is well under way.
7. Re-examine the 1950s proposals of Rapacki, Kennan, and others for a European disengagement and/or de-nuclearization system.
8. Transfer part of the funds and personnel saved by nuclear phase-out and deactivation and dismantling to increase US conventional capabilities in Europe and in some version of a rapid deployment force. In Europe, more emphasis on organization, coordination, standardization, and on weapons that have demonstrably greater defensive than offensive capacities. Alternatively, re-invigorate the MBFR (Mutual Balanced Force Reduction) negotiations, or some combination.
9. Early on, institute a substantial economic conversion program, including education, training, investment, tax breaks, etc. Take up employment slack by, for example, re-building canal and railroad systems in both nations.
10. Develop domestic socio-political conversion programs that will reward non-military allocations and those elements that effectively push for demilitarization and humanization of both societies.
11. Allocate some of the saved resources and personnel to economic development programs – under UN auspices – in third and fourth world societies.
12. Develop, examine, and advocate stronger UN or supra-national institutions and procedures for arms inspection, monitoring, peace-keeping, conflict-settlement, and economic/social development. Establish UN peace observation agency, utilizing indicators of hardware and personnel deactivation as well as of psychological and socio-economic demobilization.

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