

The Game of Arms Control

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Ever since Gorbachev launched his campaign for controlling the nuclear arms race, the U.S. arms control school is in disarray. What we are witnessing today in the U.S. is the convergence of two influential schools of thought, though diametrically opposite - one the traditional arms control school and the other the arms control critics or the "hawks, doves and owls" - with the avowed objective of reversing the revolutionary trend of reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons initiated by Reagan and Gorbachev with the ratification of the INF Agreement. Traditionally, it has been understood that the military industrial complex (MIC), the largest vested interest group operating and influencing the U.S. ruling elite, has been responsible for the uncontrolled nuclear arms race. Years ago, President Eisenhower had testified this in his farewell address to the nation. The *rationale* on which the MIC operates is well known. These include:

- (1) the systemic threat from communism as an ideology;
- (2) the overwhelming Soviet military threat; and
- (3) the perverse logic that the Soviets can never be trusted.

This is what we describe in international politics as the Cold War logic. This formidable lobby has chosen the more articular anti-arms control analysts and the hardliners among the strategic thinkers as their ally, to attack the U.S. Administration which is willing to negotiate arms control agreements for limiting or freezing the existing levels of the nuclear arsenal. This particular anti-arms control coalition had been most successful during the Reagan Administration until Reagan himself, in a surprising turn of events during the summit parleys, agreed with Gorbachev to take a few radical though incremental steps, in the direction of ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

On the one hand, they argued that it was impossible to get rid of nuclear weapons and especially the knowledge of it and a world without nuclear weapons will be a very dangerous one. James Schlesinger, for instance, wrote soon after the Reykjavik summit meeting in October 1986:

"Nuclear arsenals are going to be with us as long as there are sovereign

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States with conflicting ideologies. Unlike Aladin with his lamp, we have no way to force the nuclear genie back into the bottle. *A world without nuclear weapons is a utopian dream....* Even if all parties were actually to abide by an agreement to destroy strategic arms, all would, out of sheer prudence, be poised to resume production and deployment. Given that imprint of nuclear capabilities on our minds, to seek total nuclear disarmament is to seek a goal as risky as it is impractical".¹

Richard Perle is particularly remembered as the author of the "Zero Option" concept which was intended to be rejected by the Soviets. Colin S. Gray, a well-known hardliner, on the other hand, has been advocating a "theory of victory", by launching a limited nuclear attack against the Soviet Union. He believes in the employment of nuclear weapons with the clear cut political goal of overthrowing the Communist rule in Russia and liberating East Europe from the Soviet hegemony. Other strategic experts who had a negative influence on the future of arms control under the Reagan Administration included Richard Burt and Paul Nitze who were themselves U.S. arms control negotiators. They argued that:

- (a) arms control was the real obstacle to Reagan's policy of rearmament and nuclear force modernization in order to reduce the "window of vulnerability";
- (b) "arms control, by holding the false promise of security through cooperation, was equivalent to moral disarmament and would sap the resolve of the Congress and the public to make sacrifices required to sustain the needed military build up".⁴

Fortunately, only a lunatic fringe in the U.S. believes in the employment of nuclear weapons in any form whether limited, protracted or an all-out nuclear war. Even President Reagan conceded that nuclear war can never be won and nuclear war shall never be fought. What planetary annihilation nuclear weapons can do, has been graphically described by Jonathan Schell in his well known book: *The Fate of the Earth* (1982). Nuclear war is still unthinkable. While Robert MacNamara observed that nuclear weapons have no use except as a deterrent, George Kennan in his book, *Nuclear Delusion* described the nuclear bomb as the "most useless weapon ever invented".

It is, therefore, evident that today the arms control school has become the real obstacle to the progress of future disarmament negotiations.

'LIVING WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS' LOGIC

Nuclear war avoidance is a declared arms control policy, but a fun-

damental hypothesis underlying this objective is that arms control will bring about the transition to a gradual reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons and it will enable the two nuclear Goliaths to walk back to safety. Theoretically, it has been conceived as a half way house between nuclear arms race and disarmament by-arms control experts like David Singer. The prevention of a nuclear war is only a part of the arms control process which will culminate in the creation of a nuclear free world. Hence, 'living with nuclear weapons' logic recently advocated by the Harvard Nuclear Study Group instead of their elimination, is a dogmatic view of arms control in defense of the nuclear stalemate in order to perpetuate an inequitable international system characterized by the nuclear dominance/dependence paradigm. Like *nuclear theology*⁶ with its own dogma and doctrines of nuclear war-fighting, the arms control dogma of "living with nuclear weapons" is being treated as sacrosanct and even as an end in itself. This myopic view has been responsible for total dependence on nuclear weapon and its mystique.

DOCTRINE OF DETERRENCE

What sustains the intellectual reasoning of 'living with nuclear weapons' logic is the doctrine of deterrence. The UN study of deterrence by the group of experts in 1986, shows the importance of deterrence to American and Soviet nuclear strategy. *Deterrence is a fact of life and not a myth*. Thanks to deterrence, a nuclear war has been avoided so far. Deterrence accounts for the tranquility and peace in Europe for the longest spell of time; and also for the nuclear stalemate existing between the superpowers. But how long can the superpowers rely on deterrence? As Fred Ikle asked: "Will deterrence last out until the end of the century?" What is the cost of deterrence? What are the political gains of deterrence?

Some strategic analysts tried to answer these pertinent questions by taking a critical view of this important nuclear doctrine. To quote Fred Ikle:

"The jargon of American strategic analysis works like a narcotic. It dulls our sense of moral outrage.... It blinds us to the fact that our method for preventing nuclear war rests on a form of warfare universally condemned since the Dark Ages - the mass killing of hostages".⁷

Indeed, deterrence is an immoral, genocide doctrine. Surprisingly the American Church and society began questioning the morality of nuclear weapons and the doctrine of deterrence. As the Pastoral letter of the Catholic bishops in the US indicated, it raised normative issues like the right of a nation to deprive a human being of his life by the nuclear threat of annihilation. The Harvard Nuclear Study Group, the foremost champions of "Living with nuclear weapons" logic conceded: "We agree with the bishops

that nuclear deterrence is only conditionally moral; the condition being that we make genuine efforts to reduce dependence on nuclear deterrence over the long-run".⁸

The United States has spent approximately \$ 10 trillion = One Thousand Billion and the Soviets might have incurred an equal cost to maintain their nuclear deterrence. The annual average American spending on nuclear weapons under each U.S. President since Truman has been published in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist* recently⁹:

Truman	\$ 3,920 million
Eisenhower	\$ 7,904 million
Kennedy	\$ 7,690 million
Johnson	\$ 4,747 million
Nixon	\$ 3,505 million
Ford	\$ 3,317 million
Carter	\$ 3,834 million
Reagan	\$ 7,552 million

One of the justifications of the SDI has been that it enhances mutual deterrence. Richard Falk referred to the political advantages of deterrence in his characteristic style:

"Deterrence has become so entrenched as an approach not because it has objective merit as the best means to avoid war, but because it alone reconciles nuclearism and the state system in an age of technophilia. Its hyper-rationality is in the last analysis, an ingenuous rationalization for the international status quo." Deterrence is used to legitimise:

- (a) the uncontrolled nuclear arms race;
- (b) the threat of an immoral genocide of millions of innocent people;
- (c) the holding as hostage of US and Soviet citizens; and
- (d) nuclear weapons monopoly and nuclear dominance/dependence theory.

NEW DOCTRINES AND TECHNOLOGIES INFLUENCING ARMS CONTROL DECISIONS

From such strange nuclear logic, other arms control anomalies and technological developments which will only aggravate the current nuclear stalemate and complicate arms control negotiations, arise.

The doctrine of discriminate deterrence is the latest doctrinal offshoot of this panicky response to the relentless Soviet pressure on the United States to

retreat from the nuclear madness of the superpowers. This is essentially a limited nuclear strike concept based on counter-force strategy and being contemplated in anticipation of a variety of threats likely to arise from new type of weapon systems and unprecedented technological advances as outlined in the Report on Discriminate Deterrence prepared by Fred C. Ikle, Albert Wohlstetter and others in 1988. Nothing can be more dangerous than "thinking the unthinkable" in any refined formula as limited nuclear war fighting will escalate.

The phasing out of MX and in its place, introducing a new type of mobile, single warhead ICBM called the Midgetman in the early 1990s, had been recommended by the Brent Scowcroft Commission appointed by President Reagan for Strategic Force Modernization in 1983. The Stealth technology (B-2 bomber) air-breathing systems like the Cruise missiles (Sea-launched and ground launched in addition to air launched cruise missiles), Trident II-D-5 (Ohio class) nuclear submarines, etc. in addition to the SDI systems are other examples of the mushrooming of new first strike weapon systems, creating strategic dis-equilibrium.

Henry Kissinger admitted that arms control was heading for an intellectual dead end and it was a folly on the part of the U.S. to have MIRVed the US ICBMs which led to the Soviet strategic superiority. Hence, he suggested that the US should even unilaterally undo the mistake so that it can persuade the Soviets to destroy the MIRVed SS-18s and abandon MX if Soviets agreed to dismantle SS-18s. This clever strategic revisionism can only create more mistrust in the Soviet leadership about U.S. intentions¹¹ as the mainstay of Soviet strategic capability namely the "heavies" of the land based ICBMs would have to be surrendered.

Joseph Nye and Thomas Schelling, two well known arms control thinkers, are concerned about the new arms control approach of the Reagan Administration. Hence they are going back to the old argument that counter-force targeting is the linchpin of Soviet strategy and a corresponding restructuring of US counterforce strategy which is capable of producing an effective pre-emptive, retaliatory capability.¹²

Joseph Nye, is also worried about the proposed deep cuts (50%) now being examined by the US and the USSR in order to reduce strategic weapon systems, as a follow up measure, after the successful conclusion of the INF Treaty. Joseph Nye argues that "the most important measures are those that lengthen the fuses rather than deep cuts ... timely warning and time for diplomacy to work rather than the number of weapons should be measures of successful arms control and force structures".¹³

Similarly, Thomas Schelling observes: "nobody ever offers a convincing reason for preferring smaller numbers".¹⁴ Thomas Schelling goes to the extent of arguing against zero option as the goal of arms control (though he has been disproved by the INF Treaty that zero-option can be the goal of arms control). Their biased view on deep cuts becomes most manifest when Joseph Nye in particular says:

"Many strategists warn that reductions which cut too deeply could be destabilizing. The stability of deterrence is an elusive concept, but it has at least three dimensions: crisis stability, arms race stability and political stability. Each would be affected if cuts were too deep".¹⁵

The foregoing review of the current thinking on arms control by some of the leading arms control analysts reveals the dilemma of arms control. Their alarmist approach stems from the fact that they are not prepared to face the realities and the far-reaching consequences of Gorbachev-Reagan initiative, leading towards deep cuts and the final elimination of nuclear weapons. Nor have they reconciled to Reagan's new arms control approach. A strange coalition of the hard-liners of the Reagan Administration who were opposed to arms control and genuine arms controllers who seek to maintain the status quo seems to be emerging to take a last ditch stand against deep cuts and the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. All arms controllers feel betrayed because their faith in nuclear weapons is being undermined by the shift in the U.S. policy.

MOVING TOWARDS A NUCLEAR WEAPON-FREE WORLD

The INF Treaty demonstrates clearly that progress in arms control negotiations is possible. But "living with nuclear weapons" logic, notwithstanding all its sophisticated reasoning and analytical brilliance can no longer take us to this goal. Even Caspar Weinberger, until recently known as an enemy of arms control, has conceded that the "old" form of arms control is unacceptable. "Arms control has been transformed and the old and I think it is fair to say, bankrupt concept of arms agreements has been discarded".¹⁶

If one can possibly look beyond, without the blinkers of the inadequate arms control theories of the past, one can really appreciate what Gorbachev and Reagan are trying to do by relying on reduction, deep cuts and the final elimination of nuclear weapons through arms control. What underlines this new approach is that it provides a *theology for survival*, perhaps the only mutually assured survival. Faith in the efficacy of the new arms control approach can demolish all psychological barriers, a "species fixation", as George Kennan would like to call it, "brewed out of many components such as fears, resentments, national pride, and the tendency of national communities to

idealize themselves and to dehumanize the opponent".¹⁷

If arms control has become a daring political act of faith for survival, old clichés symbolic of national distrust and hatred, such as 'dead or red', 'holocaust or humiliation', 'suicide or surrender', 'sudden destruction or slow defeat' etc. should be dumped in the dustbin of history.

Moving towards a nuclear free world is a gradual process and the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons will come in stages within a time frame as the Gorbachev proposal and the Indian proposal outlined by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in his speech at the UN SSOD-III in June 1988. In fact, arms control was hostage to the unending debate on myriad technical obstacles, real or imaginary, surrounding nuclear weapons and arms control negotiations. But now there is the evidence of a political will which is the ultimate arbiter of all decisions on nuclear weapons' elimination. I would, therefore, propose a Reagan or Bush-Gorbachev Pact (Like the Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928)¹⁸ for renouncing nuclear weapons and nuclear war as an instrument of national policy by all nuclear weapons States to be followed by all other nations at an appropriate stage in the arms control negotiations. This will be another important milestone while negotiating alternative steps for moving towards a nuclear weapon free world.

This compelling "adaption to a new type of thinking", as Albert Einstein¹⁹ once said, alone will help mankind to survive the crisis of the nuclear age. Arms control negotiations are not merely about technology and weapons systems but also about security and survival. These vital issues are too serious to be left in the hands of strategic experts only. It involves both political and moral questions which should be resolved by political leaders and statesmen in accordance with the aspirations of the people and world public opinion.

Robert Oppenheimer once said: "I find myself profoundly anguished over the fact that no ethical discourse of any nobility or weight has been addressed to the problem of atomic weapons".²⁰ This moral issue should be the focus of all deliberations on arms control. The debate on the technicalities of nuclear weapons is the game of arms control to trap us in the vortex of the nuclear stalemate from which there is no escape. Both Thomas Schelling and Joseph Nye are only attempting to revise the rules of the game of arms control as they feel it outrageous to question the conventional wisdom about arms control.

Gorbachev's arms control initiatives and the recent unilateral conventional arms reduction proposals are deeply relevant to South Asia too. The hard liners and cold warriors in New Delhi and Islamabad can no longer

argue that regional, arms control is a pie in the sky. After the ratification of the INF Agreement and with the on-going negotiations on the 50% cut in strategic triad, one cannot seek refuge under Article VI of the NPT. India and Pakistan can now start the process of initiating proposals to reduce their conventional forces capabilities, budgetary reductions, mutual inspection of their nuclear installations and the South Asian nuclear weapon free zone alongwith other confidence-building measures. The atmospherics are all conducive to stop the drum beating and to begin peace-making in South Asia.

Notes:

- 1 *Time*, October 27, 1986, p. 11. (Italics added)
- 2 Strobbe Talbott, *Deadly Gambits* (London: Pan Books, 1985), pp. 57-58.
- 3 Colin S. Gray, "Nuclear Strategy: The Case for a Theory of Victory", *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Summer 1979, p. 70.
- 4 See, Arnold Horelick, "U.S.-Soviet Relations: The Return of Arms Control", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 3, 1985, p. 514.
- 5 Albert Carnesale *et. al.*, *Living with Nuclear Weapons*, Harvard Nuclear Study Group (New York: Bantam Books, 1983).
- 6 Henry Trofimenko, "The Theology of Strategy", *ORBIS*, Fall 1977, pp. 497 ff.
- 7 *Foreign Affairs*, 51 (2), p. 14.
- 8 Albert Carnesale, *op. cit.*, p. 248.
- 9 August 1985, p. 109, f.n. 9.
- 10 *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, August 1985, p. 137.
- 11 Henry Kissinger, "A New Approach to Arms Control", *Time*, March 21, 1983, p. 17.
- 12 Joseph Nye, "Farewell to Arms Control", *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1986; Thomas Schelling, "What Went Wrong Arms Control?", *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1985/86. Also see *Hawks, Doves and Owls* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985).
- 13 Joseph Nye, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
- 14 *Foreign Affairs*, *op. cit.* p. 226.
- 15 *Foreign Affairs*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- 16 *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1988, p. 705.
- 17 *The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet American Relations in the Atomic Age* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 178.
- 18 E.H. Carr, *International Relations between the Two World Wars, 1919-1939* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1950), p. 118.
- 19 Linus Pauling, *No More War* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1958), p. 5.
- 20 Quoted in, "The Church and Nuclear Deterrence". *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1983, p. 828.