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FORCE AND DIPLOMACY IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

By Henry A. Kissinger

IN his whimsical essay "Perpetual Peace" written in 1795, the German philosopher Kant predicted that world peace could be attained in one of two ways: by a moral consensus which he identified with a republican form of government, or by a cycle of wars of ever-increasing violence which would reduce the major Powers to impotence.

There is no evidence that Kant's essay was taken seriously in his lifetime, or indeed for a century and a half afterwards. But much of current thought about the impact of the new weapons of today carries a premonition of Kant's second proposition. We respond to every Soviet advance in the nuclear field by what can best be described as a flight into technology, by devising ever more fearful weapons. The more powerful the weapons, however, the greater becomes the reluctance to use them. At a period of unparalleled military strength, the President has best summed up the dilemma posed by the new weapons technology in the phrase "there is no alternative to peace."

It is only natural, of course, that an age which has known two world wars and an uneasy armistice since should have as its central problem the attainment of peace. It is paradoxical, however, that so much hope should concentrate on man's most destructive capabilities. We are told that the growth of thermonuclear stockpiles has created a "nuclear stalemate" which makes war, if not too risky, at least unprofitable. The Geneva "summit" conference has been interpreted as a nonaggression treaty: a recognition by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. that war is no longer a conceivable instrument of policy and that for this reason international disputes can be settled only by means of diplomacy. Mr. Stassen has maintained that the peaceful application of nuclear energy has made

irrelevant many of the traditional reasons for wars of aggression because each major Power can now bring about a tremendous increase in its productive capacity without annexing either foreign territory or foreign labor. And many of the critics of Mr. Dulles' interview in *Life* were concerned less with the wisdom of the specific threats than with the fact that a threat of war was made at all.

These assertions have passed almost without challenge. They fit in well with a national psychology which considers peace as the "normal" pattern of relations among states and which has few doubts that reasonable men can settle all differences by honest compromise. So much depends, however, on the correctness of such propositions that they must be subjected to close scrutiny. For the impact of the new weapons—as every revolution—has not only a technical but a conceptual side. Until power is used, it is, as Colonel Lincoln from West Point has wisely said, what people think it is. But except for the two explosions of now obsolete bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, no nuclear weapons have ever been set off in wartime; there exists, therefore, no previous experience on which to draw. To a considerable extent the impact of the new weapons on strategy, on policy, indeed on survival, depends on our interpretation of their significance.

It therefore becomes of crucial importance that the United States not paralyze itself by developing a calculus of risks according to which all dangers would seem to be on our side. But this is precisely what has happened to us recently. The slogan "there is no alternative to peace" is the reverse side of the doctrine of "massive retaliation." And both deprive us of flexibility—"massive retaliation" because it poses risks for us out of proportion to the objectives to be achieved, and "there is no alternative to peace" because it relieves the Soviets of a large measure of the risk of aggressive moves. This is true despite Soviet reiteration of the horrors of a hydrogen war. For apart from the fact that these statements are usually addressed to foreigners and may, therefore, be designed to increase the inhibitions of others, it makes all the difference which side has to initiate thermonuclear war. And as long as the Soviets retain a sufficiently flexible weapons system, they can confront us with contingencies from which we can extricate ourselves only by initiating such a war. To be sure, the President has said explicitly (December 17, 1954), "Let no man think that we want peace at any price." But the price of peace cannot be determined in the abstract. The growth

of the Soviet nuclear stockpile is certain to increase our reluctance to run the risks of an all-out war; the line between what is considered "vital" and what is "peripheral" will shift if we must weigh all objectives against the destruction of New York or Washington or Chicago.[1]

It may be argued that the emphasis on the rôle of force mistakes the main thrust of the current Soviet threat, which presents more ambiguous and subtle challenges than overt aggression. To be sure, the present period of revolutionary change will not be managed by a military doctrine alone; imaginative diplomacy and a consistent program are necessary if our aims are to be identified with the aspirations of humanity. But we always seem in danger of focussing so much attention on the current Soviet threat that we are taken unawares by the Soviet Union's frequent changes of tactics. During the period of Soviet militancy we were so preoccupied with building defensive barriers that we neglected the supporting psychological and political framework. And now, with the Soviet emphasis on more indirect methods of penetration, we stand in danger of forgetting that economic development must be accompanied by a modicum of security against foreign invasion. Moreover, it is one of the most difficult tasks of statesmanship to relate what a Power says it will do to what it is able to do. If the international order possessed the sanctions that prevail in domestic arrangements—courts and enforcement machinery, for example—relations could be conducted largely on the basis of what states assert their intentions to be. But in an international order composed of sovereign states, the principal sanction is the possession of superior force; any adverse change in power relationships involves the possibility that the gain in strength will be used with hostile intent. This is the real meaning of "atomic blackmail." As the Soviet nuclear stockpile grows, overt threats have become unnecessary; every calculation of risks will have to include the Soviet stockpile of atomic weapons and ballistic missiles.

If the phrase "there is no alternative to peace" were to become accepted doctrine, it could lead only to a paralysis of policy. It would be tantamount to renouncing power and staking everything on the professions of another sovereign state. This would have been difficult at any period; it becomes an invitation to dis-

[1] For a more detailed discussion of the doctrine of "massive retaliation" see the author's "Military Policy and the Defense of the Grey Areas," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1955.

aster when we are confronted with a revolutionary Power which prides itself on its superior understanding of "objective" forces, and to which policies unrelated to a plausible possibility of employing force will seem either hypocrisy or stupidity. Force and diplomacy are not discrete realms; on the contrary, the ultimate pressure during negotiations has always been the possibility that recourse might be had to force. To the extent that the slogan "there is no alternative to peace" is taken seriously by the Soviets as a statement of American intentions, it will remove a powerful brake on Soviet probing actions and any incentive for the Soviet Union to make concessions. At best the doctrine "there is no alternative to peace" can achieve only an indefinite continuation of the status quo. In this context, our frequent pronouncements that we refuse to accept the satellite orbit will seem hollow or will even backfire: they will give impetus to Soviet peace offensives without generating a meaningful pressure on the Soviet sphere.

The discussion about war being "inconceivable" has, however, performed this useful purpose: it has drawn attention to the paradox that we are preparing for a war which we did not fight even when we possessed an atomic monopoly and that we have not yet found a rationale for such a war when weapons have become incomparably more destructive. On the contrary, far from giving us freedom of action, the very power of modern weapons seems to inhibit it. In short, our weapons technology and the objectives for employing them have become incommensurable. No more urgent task confronts the United States than to bring them into harmony.

II

But perhaps this incommensurability is inherent in the new weapons and not in the military doctrine? Perhaps we are moving into a new era of international relations in which the Powers will have to adjust themselves to the fact that force can no longer be used? What about "nuclear stalemate?"

Of course, "stalemates" have occurred before in the history of war, particularly in the relation of offense to defense. The distinguishing feature of the current use of the term is that it refers not to a balance on the battlefield, but to a calculus of risks: with each side possessing the capability to inflict catastrophic blows on the other, war is said to be no longer a rational course of action. It is important, however, to be precise about the deterrent

effect of the "nuclear stalemate:" it deters not only aggression, but resistance to it; and it deters not war as such, but *all-out* war. The side which can present its challenges in less than all-out form may, therefore, be able to use the "nuclear stalemate" to its advantage.

Moreover, even if a nuclear stalemate does exist, it does not make for stability in the present volatile state of technology—much less for a sense of harmony. The spectre of a technological breakthrough by the other side would always loom large; it would lend an apocalyptic quality to all current international relations.

For the purpose of national policy, however, the significance of the term "stalemate" resides not in the technical but in the psychological aspect. For the "stalemate" is not anything new. Actually it has existed ever since the explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To be sure, it was not a physical stalemate; for nearly a decade the United States was relatively immune from Soviet retaliation. But it was a stalemate nonetheless in the sense that we never succeeded in translating our military superiority into a political advantage. This was due to many factors: a theory of war based on the necessity of total victory, the memory of the wartime alliance with the Soviets, humanitarian impulses, lack of clarity about the process in which we found ourselves involved. But whatever the reason, our atomic monopoly had at best a deterrent effect. While it may have prevented a further expansion of the Soviet sphere, it did not enable us to achieve a strategic transformation in our favor. Indeed, even its importance as a deterrent is questionable. Assuming that there had never been an atomic bomb, would we really have acquiesced in the Soviet Union's taking over Europe? Would the U.S.S.R. have risked a general war so soon after having its territory devastated by the Germans and having lost, by the most conservative estimates, 10,000,000 dead? Not even a dictatorship can do everything simultaneously.

But apart from the questionable assumption that all-out war was prevented by our atomic monopoly, the decade witnessed the consolidation of a satellite orbit in Eastern Europe, the triumph of Communism in China and, most fundamental of all, the growth of the Soviet atomic stockpile. Those who expect great things from technological breakthroughs would do well to study American actions after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. No foreseeable technological breakthrough is likely to be more fundamental than

the discovery of the A-bomb. Yet possession of it did not enable us to prevent another Power which never hid its hostile intent from expanding its orbit and developing a capacity to inflict a mortal blow on the United States.

How did this come about? Primarily because we added the A-bomb to our military arsenal without integrating its implications into our thinking; because we saw it merely as another tool in a theory of warfare which had showed a poverty—indeed almost an absence—of political conception during the two world wars, and which became completely inapplicable after the explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

For over a century before the outbreak of World War I, wars were an extension of policy. Because they were fought for specific political objectives there existed a rough commensurability between the force employed and the goal sought. But with the outbreak of World War I, war suddenly seemed to become an end in itself. After the first few months, none of the protagonists would have been able to name an objective other than the total defeat of the enemy or, at least, they would have named objectives, such as the German demand for the annexation of Belgium, which amounted to unconditional surrender. There had occurred a hiatus between military and political planning which has never subsequently been bridged. The military staffs had developed plans for total victory, because it is in such plans that all factors are under the control of the military. But political leadership proved incapable of giving this conception a concrete expression in terms of peace aims. The result was four years of war of ever-increasing violence which carried its hatreds into a peace treaty that considered more the redressing of sacrifices than the stability of the international order.

The notion that war and peace, military and political goals, were separate had become so commonplace by the end of World War II that the most powerful nation in the world found itself paralyzed by the enormity of its own weapons technology. In every concrete instance, even in the matter of the regulation of the atom which affected our very survival, we found ourselves stalemated by our own preconceptions. The consequences of military actions which we might take always seemed to outbalance the gains to be achieved. Thus our policy became entirely defensive. We possessed a doctrine to repel overt aggression, but we could not translate it into a positive goal. And even in the one

instance where we resisted aggression we did not use the weapon around which our whole military planning had been built. The hiatus between military and national policy was complete. Our power was not commensurate with the objectives of our national policy and our military doctrine could not find any intermediary application for the new weapons. The growth of the Soviet atomic stockpile has merely brought the physical equation into line with the psychological one; it has increased the reluctance to engage in a general war even more. But it has not changed the fundamental question of how the political and military doctrines can be harmonized, how our power can give impetus to our policy rather than paralyzing it.

One way of avoiding this problem is to deny that it exists. It is possible to argue that the term "'stalemate" is illusory, that in an all-out war one side is almost certain to be able to "win" in the sense of being able to impose its will on its antagonist. This is technically correct. But it does not affect the calculus by which the decision to enter the war is taken: in its crudest form, whether it is "worth" fighting the war in the first place. Obviously no Power will start a war it thinks it is going to lose. But it will also be reluctant to start a war if the price of victory may be its national substance. The capacity to inflict greater losses on the enemy than one suffers is the condition of policy; it cannot be its objective.

The transformation imposed by the "nuclear stalemate" is not that victory in an all-out war has become technically impossible but that it can no longer be imposed at an acceptable cost. Nor is this conclusion avoided by an appeal to military rationality. For example, in Paul Nitze's hypothetical general war confined to airfields and S.A.C. installations, the bombing of cities would be unwise in the early stages of the war and unnecessary in the later ones after air superiority has been achieved.[2] But this assumes that victory is the only rational objective in war. It overlooks the fact that war is not only the instrument for imposing one's will on the defeated but is also a tool for frustrating this intent by making the effort too costly. An air battle would be a rational strategy for the side which has a strategic advantage either in terms of base structure or in weapons potential, for it would put the enemy at its mercy at a minimum cost. But for the side which stands to lose the air battle and which seeks to

[2] Paul Nitze, "Atoms, Strategy and Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1956.

exact a maximum price for its own defeat, the most rational strategy may well be to inflict maximum destruction. Such a Power may at least attempt to equalize the *threat* of nuclear destruction by inflicting its *actuality* on the enemy and thereby deprive him of the fruits of his victory, or at least make it too risky for him to seek total victory. Unconditional surrender—or depriving the enemy of his nuclear capability, which amounts to the same thing—cannot be achieved by subterfuge.

III

But does the stalemate, defined as the impossibility of achieving total victory at an acceptable cost, apply to lesser conflicts? In other words, is limited war a conceivable instrument of policy in the nuclear period? Here we must analyze precisely what is meant by limited war.

One can think of many models: a war confined to a geographic area, a war that does not utilize the whole weapons system, a war which utilizes the whole weapons system but limits its employment to specific targets. But none of these military definitions seems adequate, since a war may be confined geographically or in terms of targets and yet be total in the sense of exhausting the national substance, as happened to France in World War I. The fact that the whole weapons system is not employed, or that the destructive capability of the existing weapons system is small, is not of itself a factor of limitation. In the Thirty Years' War the number of men in each army was small by present-day standards, the power of the weapons was negligible compared to modern armaments, and yet it is estimated that at least 30 percent of the population of Germany died during the course of it.

A distinction based on the difference between nuclear weapons and "conventional armaments" is no more fruitful. Apart from the fact that the distinction becomes increasingly nebulous as we develop nuclear weapons of very low yield, it will be impossible to reverse present trends. The very existence of nuclear armaments on both sides seems to insure that any future war will be nuclear. At a minimum, forces will have to deploy *as if* nuclear weapons might be used, because the side which concentrates its forces might thereby give its opponent the precise incentive he needs to use nuclear weapons. But if forces are dispersed, they will not be able to hold a line or achieve a breakthrough with conventional weapons, because the destructive

power of conventional weapons is so much smaller. Finally, nuclear weapons, particularly of the low-yield type, seem to offer the best opportunity to compensate for our inferiority in manpower and to use our superiority in technology to best advantage.

It is not for nothing that Soviet propaganda has played on two related themes: 1, there is no such thing as a "limited" nuclear war, and 2, "ban the bomb." For both emphasize the corollary "there is no alternative to peace" and both deprive our policy of flexibility and sap our resistance to the preferred forms of Soviet strategy: peripheral wars, subversion and atomic blackmail.

Our discussion up to this point thus leads to these conclusions: Any war is likely to be a nuclear war. Nuclear war should be fought as something less than an all-out war. There exists no way to define a limited war in purely military terms. On the contrary, wars can be limited only by political decisions, by defining objectives which do not threaten the survival of the enemy. Thus an all-out war is a war to render the enemy defenseless. A limited war is one for a specific objective which by its very existence will establish a certain commensurability between the force employed and the goal to be attained.

Limited war, therefore, presents the military with particular difficulties. An all-out war is relatively simple to plan for, because its limits are set by military considerations and even by military capacity. The characteristic of limited wars, on the other hand, is that there are ground rules which define the relationship of military to political objectives. Planning here becomes much more conjectural, much more subtle and much more indeterminate, as we found when considering intervention in Indo-China. The political leadership must therefore assume the responsibility for defining the framework within which the military are to develop plans and capabilities. The prerequisite for a policy of limited war is the re-introduction of the political element into our concept of warfare and the surrender of the notion that policy ends when war begins or that war has goals different from those of national policy.

IV

This raises the question to what extent the nuclear age permits a policy of intermediary objectives. Do any of the factors apply today which formerly led to a diplomacy of limited objectives and a military policy of limited wars?

In the great periods of European cabinet diplomacy between the Treaty of Westphalia and the French Revolution and between the Congress of Vienna and the outbreak of the First World War, wars were limited because there existed a political framework which induced the major Powers to conduct a diplomacy of limited objectives. This political framework was due to several factors. There was, to begin with, a conscious decision that the upheavals of the Thirty Years' War and of the Napoleonic Wars should not occur again. More important was the fact that the international order did not contain a revolutionary Power. No state was so dissatisfied with the peace settlement that it sought to gain its ends by overthrowing it and no Power considered that its domestic notion of justice was incompatible with that of other states. Again, the domestic structure of most governments set a limit to the proportion of the national resources which could be devoted to war. Not even the most absolute ruler by the grace of God could think of conscripting his subjects or confiscating their property. Finally, in an era of stable weapons technology, both the strength of the Powers and their assessments of those strengths were relatively fixed and as a result the risks of surprise attack and of unforeseen technological developments were relatively small.

If we inquire which of these factors—fear of war, legitimacy, limits on the domestic exercise of power and a stable power relationship—is present today, little cause for optimism remains. Under conditions of nuclear plenty, no major Power will be forced to adopt a policy of limited objectives because of insufficient resources. Moreover, for over a generation the U.S.S.R. has proclaimed the incompatibility of its domestic notion of justice with that of other states and has built an internal control system on the theory of a permanently hostile outside world. Peaceful coexistence, too, is justified by the Soviets on the basis that it will enable them to subvert the existing structure by means other than all-out war.

Nor is the nature of power relationships more reassuring. Even with a less volatile technology, a two-Power world would have an element of inherent instability because an increase in strength of one side cannot be made up by superior political dexterity but is tantamount to an absolute weakening of the other side. Actually, the weapons technology is far from stable. Almost up to the outbreak of World War II a weapons system would be good

for a generation at least, while today it may be outdated when it has barely passed the blueprint stage. In this technological race, moreover, the side which has adopted a policy of letting its opponent strike the first blow is at a distinct disadvantage; it cannot afford to fall behind even for an instant. It must phase its planning and procurement over an indefinite period while its opponent, if he is determined on a showdown, can plan for a target date.

But if neither an agreed legitimacy nor a stable power relationship exists today, they may be outweighed by the third factor in the equation: the fear of thermonuclear war. Never before have the consequences of all-out war been so unambiguous, never have the gains seemed so incommensurable with the sacrifices. What statesman who declared war in 1914 would not have recoiled had he known the shape of the world in 1918? Today every weapons test augurs much worse horrors. There exists, therefore, a limiting condition to every diplomatic move. The distinction between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons may be nebulous in military terms, but every state has a powerful incentive to make some distinction, however tenuous its logic. The fear that an all-out thermonuclear war might lead to the disintegration of the social structure should be utilized to guarantee the "limits" of war and diplomacy.

The key problem of our present-day strategy is therefore to devise alternative capabilities to confront our opponent with contingencies from which he can extricate himself only by thermonuclear war, but to deter him from this step by our retaliatory capacity. All Soviet moves in the postwar period have had this character; they have faced us with problems which by themselves did not seem "worth" an all-out war[8] but which we were unable to deal with by an alternative strategy. We refused to defeat the Chinese in Korea because we were unwilling to risk an all-out conflict; we saw no solution to the Indo-Chinese crisis without dangers we were reluctant to confront. A doctrine for the graduated employment of force might reverse or at least arrest this trend. Graduated deterrence is thus not an alternative to massive retaliation but its complement, for it is the capability for "massive retaliation" which provides the sanction against expanding war.

[8] See, for example, Thomas K. Finletter's letter to the *New York Herald Tribune*, December 22, 1955.

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A doctrine for the graduated employment of force would enable us to escape the vicious circle in which we find ourselves paralyzed by the implications of our own weapons technology. The idea that the most effective strategy is the thermonuclear bombardment of cities is a legacy of World War II, when we could attack production centers without fear of retaliation. Because the destructive power of individual weapons was then relatively small, a decisive victory on the battlefield could be achieved only by using quantities too large to stockpile; munitions and weapons had to be supplied out of current production. Under these circumstances it made sense to attempt to win through attrition, by bombing production facilities. The destructiveness of modern weapons, however, makes attrition the most wasteful strategy. Under conditions of nuclear plenty, existing stockpiles will probably suffice to achieve a decision; nuclear weapons may therefore be more decisively employed on the battlefield or against military installations such as airfields than against production centers.[4]

Moreover, while the growth of the Soviet strategic air force and atomic stockpile should cause us to revise our concepts regarding air warfare, the introduction of nuclear weapons on the battlefield will shake the very basis of Soviet tactical doctrine. No longer will the Soviets be able to rely on massed manpower and artillery as in World War II. On a nuclear battlefield, dispersion is the key to survival and mobility the prerequisite of success. A great deal depends on leadership of a high order, personal initiative and mechanical aptitude, all qualities in which our military organization probably excels that of the U.S.S.R. To be sure, there are many types of aggression to which nuclear weapons offer no solution, either for political or military reasons—civil war and guerrilla actions, for example—and we must retain a conventional capability to deal with them. The fact remains that the most fruitful area for current strategic thought is the conduct and efficacy of limited nuclear war, the "war gaming" of situations in which nuclear weapons are used by *both* sides, and a consideration of what would constitute victory in such a war.

The graduated employment of force, however, presupposes a capability which is really "graduated." If we build our whole

[4] For application of these ideas to the conduct of a military campaign, see Richard C. Leghorn, "No Need to Bomb Cities to Win Wars," *U. S. News & World Report*, January 28, 1955.

strategy around "absolute" weapons of megaton size, professions of limited objectives will be meaningless and any use of nuclear weapons is likely to touch off an all-out war. The possibility of keeping a limited nuclear war limited depends on our ability to extend the range of low-yield weapons of a kiloton and below, and to devise tactics for their utilization on the battlefield.

At the same time, a doctrine for the graduated employment of force and the renunciation of unconditional surrender should not be confused with the acceptance of a stalemate. The flexibility of our diplomacy will increase as our military alternatives multiply. And militarily, the notion that there is no alternative between total victory and the *status quo ante* is much too mechanical. If the military position of an enemy became untenable and if he were offered choices other than unconditional surrender, he might accept local withdrawals without resorting to all-out war. If S.A.C. retains its retaliatory capacity, the other side may decide that amputation is preferable to suicide. In these terms the calculus of risks by which a limited nuclear war is expanded into an all-out thermonuclear exchange is almost the same as that by which a limited conventional war is expanded into an all-out war. Whether we can obtain local adjustments will thus depend on: 1, the ability to generate pressures other than the threat of thermonuclear war; 2, the ability to create a climate of opinion in which national survival is not thought to be at stake in every issue; 3, the ability to keep control of public opinion should a disagreement arise over whether national survival is at stake.

But is it possible to bring about a climate in which national survival is thought not to be at stake? Pressures severe enough to cause withdrawal may, after all, be severe enough to be thought to threaten survival, especially in a régime like that in Soviet Russia. On the other hand, the problem is not how to reassure the Soviets, which is probably a well-nigh impossible effort, but how to give effect to the one interest we presumably have in common: that we both wish to avoid all-out thermonuclear war. Given this attitude, total war is likely in only two contingencies: if the Soviets see an opportunity to achieve hegemony in Eurasia by peripheral actions which we are not able to deal with by a graduated employment of force; or if the U.S.S.R. should misunderstand our intentions and treat our every military move as if it were the prelude to an all-out war.

It therefore becomes the task of our diplomacy to convey to

the Soviet bloc that we are capable of courses other than all-out war or inaction, and that we intend to use this capability. Fortunately, the imbalance in our national strategy has been caused less by our diplomacy than by our military policy. Indeed, our difficulty has been precisely the fact that our moderate pronouncements have seemed incongruous in the face of an all-or-nothing military policy and that our diplomacy has been deprived of flexibility because "massive retaliation" has had as its logical corollary the slogan "there is no alternative to peace." A modification of our military doctrine would, therefore, go a long way towards creating a framework of limited objectives; the next step would be to convey this change to the outside world. Others have suggested details of such a diplomatic program.[6] Possible measures might include proposals for conventions regarding open cities, greater publicity for tests of low-yield nuclear weapons, and a high-level pronouncement which defines as precisely as possible what is meant by the "graduated" employment of force.

Such a program should be distinguished sharply from the Soviet "ban the bomb" propaganda, however. We cannot afford even the implication that nuclear weapons are in a special category, apart from modern weapons in general, for this undermines the psychological basis of the most effective United States strategy. If nuclear weapons were outlawed, Soviet superiority in manpower would again become a factor and its stockpile of conventional weapons would place Eurasia at the mercy of the Soviets, at least in an intermediary period while we adjusted our procurement, training and organization. "Ban the bomb" proposals, moreover, distract from the real security problem which is Soviet aggression, a fact that American diplomacy should not permit the world to forget. The diplomatic and psychological framework for the graduated employment of force is created not by "ban the bomb" proposals but by defining the conditions of its use. To be sure, a diplomatic program for the graduated employment of force will not inevitably prevent an all-out war; if the Soviets feel strong enough to knock us out by a surprise attack, they will presumably do so. But it may prevent an all-out war caused by our failure to develop alternatives or by Soviet miscalculation or misunderstanding of our intentions.

Moreover, while the Marxist philosophy has heretofore im-

[6] For example, Rear Admiral Sir Anthony W. Buzzard, *Manchester Guardian*, November 3, 1955.

parted great flexibility to Soviet policy we may be able to use it as well to give effect to a policy of graduated deterrence. The belief in inevitable triumph is after all as consistent with tactical withdrawal as with an effort to fill every power vacuum. All of Soviet history testifies to the fact that this is not a régime for last stands if other alternatives present themselves. One need only study the abject efforts of the Politburo in the months before the German invasion to come to a settlement with Hitler to realize that if confronted with superior power the Soviets do not hesitate to apply Lenin's dictum, "One step backward, two steps forward." And this tendency is supported by all of Russian history. Russia has always been less able to apply force subtly than massively; she has always been more vulnerable to wars outside her territories than within, and to limited rather than all-out war.

The strategic problem for the United States, then, can be summed up in these propositions:

1. Thermonuclear war must be avoided, except as a last resort.

2. No power possessing thermonuclear weapons is likely to accept unconditional surrender without employing them and no nation is likely to risk thermonuclear destruction except to the extent that it believes its survival to be at stake.

3. It is the task of our diplomacy, therefore, to make clear that we do not aim for unconditional surrender, to create a framework in which the question of national survival is not involved in every issue. But equally we should leave no doubt about our determination to achieve intermediary objectives and to resist by force any Soviet military move.

4. Since diplomacy which is not related to a plausible employment of force is sterile, it must be the task of our military policy to develop a doctrine and a capability for the graduated employment of force.

VI

The discussion up to this point has been primarily concerned with the impact of our diplomacy and of our military policy on the Soviet bloc. Its impact on our allies and the uncommitted nations is no less important. The truism that the contemporary crisis cannot be solved solely by the exercise of power should not be confused with the notion that power plays no rôle in contemporary affairs. Peace has never been maintained except by making aggression too costly; the benefits of diversity which the

free world still enjoys are due to the shield afforded by American military strength. For this reason alone, the quest for an adequate American military doctrine concerns not only us but also the rest of the world.

There can be little doubt that our system of alliances is undergoing a crisis. Many reasons for this exist: the Soviet peace offensive, the domestic problems of France, the economic stagnation of Britain, Canada's increasing sense of vulnerability. But surely one fundamental cause is the absence of a unifying military doctrine. The argument most frequently advanced for our coalition policy is that we require overseas bases. But whatever sense this policy makes to us, it is not persuasive to countries who want above all to avoid another round of bombings and occupation. Our allies realize, moreover, that in an all-out thermonuclear war the ground strength of our NATO partners will be almost irrelevant; in terms of the doctrine of massive retaliation our allies see little military significance in their own contribution. The growth of the Soviet atomic stockpile compounds these difficulties. Heretofore, a nation threatened with attack would generally resist because the potential destruction was insignificant compared to the consequences of surrender. But now, when most of our NATO partners consider the outbreak of a war as leading inevitably to national catastrophe, our system of alliances is in dire jeopardy. It can be restored, if at all, only by two measures: one, by a military doctrine and capability which makes clear that not every war is necessarily an all-out thermonuclear war, even in Europe; two, by measures such as the air defense of NATO, which reduce the sense of impotence felt by our allies in the face of the threat of thermonuclear war.

The problem with respect to the uncommitted nations, particularly those newly independent, is more complicated. Where our NATO partners suffer from a perhaps excessive awareness of the reality of power, the former colonial states seem hardly conscious of its existence and nature. This is understandable. The leaders of the newly independent states achieved their positions by distinguishing themselves in the struggle with the former colonial Powers. But the independence movements almost without exception provided a poor preparation for an understanding of modern power relationships. Based on the dogmas of late nineteenth century liberalism, especially its pacifism, the independence movements relied more on ideological agreement than on

an evaluation of power factors. Indeed, the claim to superior spirituality remains the battle cry of Asian nationalism. Moreover, the bad conscience of the colonial Powers and their preoccupation with European problems gave the struggle for independence more the character of a domestic debate than of a power dispute. To be sure, many of the leaders of the newly independent Powers spent years in jail and suffered heroically for their cause. It is not to deny the measure of their dedication to assert that the results achieved were out of proportion to their suffering. Empires which had held vast dominions for hundreds of years disappeared without a battle being fought.

And if it is difficult for the leaders to retain a sense of proportion, it is next to impossible for the mass of the people. On the whole they were involved in the struggle for independence only with their sympathies; to them the disappearance of the colonial Powers must seem nothing short of miraculous. Moreover, most of the people of the newly independent states live in pre-industrial societies. It would be difficult enough for them to grasp the full impact of industrialism; it is too much to expect them to understand the meaning of nuclear technology. It is therefore understandable that in most former colonial areas there is an overestimation of what can be achieved by the power of words alone. Nor is this tendency diminished by the rewards that fall to the uncommitted in the contest for their allegiance waged by the two big power centers. There must be an almost overwhelming temptation to defer the solution of difficult internal problems by entering the international arena, to solidify a complicated domestic position by triumphs in the field of foreign policy.

But however understandable, it is a dangerous trend. If this were a tranquil period, nothing would be involved but minor irritations. But in the present crisis, the dogmatism of these newly independent states makes them susceptible to Soviet "peace offensives," and their lack of appreciation of power relationships may cause them to overestimate the protection afforded by moral precepts.

The power chiefly visible to the newly independent states is that of Soviet or Chinese armies on their borders. The United States must counter with a twentieth century equivalent of "showing the flag," with measures which will permit us to make our power felt quickly and decisively, not only to deter Soviet aggression but to impress the uncommitted with our capacity

for action. This does not mean "rattling the atom bomb." What it does require is greater mobility and a weapons system that can deal with the tensions most likely to arise in the uncommitted areas—tensions which do not lend themselves to the massive employment of thermonuclear weapons: civil war, peripheral attacks or a war among the uncommitted.

To be sure, this is an ungrateful and indeed an unpopular course. But we will not be able to avoid unpopularity. In the short run, all we can hope for is respect. Moreover, condescending as it may seem, we have an important educational task to perform in the newly independent countries on the subject of power in the nuclear age. Within a generation, and probably in less time than that, most of these states will possess nuclear power plants and therefore the wherewithal to manufacture nuclear weapons. And even if this should not prove the case, the Soviets may find it advantageous to increase international tensions by making available nuclear weapons, on the model of their arms deal with Egypt. But nuclear weapons in the hands of weak, irresponsible or merely ignorant governments present grave dangers. Unless the United States has successfully established ground rules for their graduated employment, many areas of the world will begin to play the traditional rôle of the Balkans in European politics: the fuse which will set off a holocaust.

VII

One of the difficulties in the nuclear period has been our tendency to treat its problems primarily as technical. But power is meaningless in the absence of a doctrine for employing it. The debate provoked by Mr. Dulles' interview in *Life* has again emphasized this dilemma: the enormity of modern weapons makes the thought of war repugnant, but a refusal to run any risk would amount to giving the Soviets a blank check. Our dilemma has been defined as the alternative of Armageddon or defeat without war. We can overcome the paralysis induced by such a prospect only by creating other alternatives both in our diplomacy and in our military policy. Such measures require strong nerves. We can make the graduated employment of force stick only if we leave no doubt about our readiness to face a final showdown; its effectiveness will depend on our willingness to face up to the risks of Armageddon.

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NPT: THE LOGIC OF INEQUALITY

by Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

When the third conference to review the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) convenes in Geneva this September, the halls and headlines will be filled with acrimony. Diplomats from non-nuclear-weapons states will charge the superpowers with discrimination, hypocrisy, and failure to live up to their commitments to disarm. Should this drama be taken seriously? No and yes. Excessive rhetoric is a hallmark of such conferences, and it will not necessarily signify an imminent collapse of the treaty. Yet these charges underscore a more basic, long-run security problem that the superpowers have tended to neglect in recent years and that could lead to the failure of the NPT when it comes up for renewal in 1995.

In the 40-year history of nuclear weaponry two remarkable facts stand out. The first is that in a world of sovereign states in which the right of self-defense is enshrined in the United Nations Charter as well as in international law, many countries have agreed to forgo acquiring the most destructive weapons of self-defense. The second is that although nuclear weapons technology has spread somewhat over four decades, it has not spread as widely as expected. In 1963 President John Kennedy envisaged a world in the 1970s with 15 to 25 nuclear weapons states posing "the greatest possible danger." Instead, today there are about seven: five declared weapons states, one state that has exploded a nuclear device but not produced weapons, and one or two that may have produced weapons but that have not yet set off an explosion.

Nuclear reality has been less alarming than predicted for several reasons, including the restrictive policies of the weapons states; the

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calculated self-interest of many nonweapons states in forgoing nuclear weapons; and the development of an international regime of treaties, rules, and procedures that establishes a general presumption against proliferation. The main norms and practices of this regime are found in the NPT and in regional counterparts such as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which aims to keep Latin America non-nuclear; in the safeguards, rules, and procedures of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); and in various U.N. resolutions. With a few important exceptions, the great majority of states adhere to at least some of these norms. But can such a situation last?

Some charge that the nonproliferation regime is doomed because of its discriminatory nature; they view the regime as an artificial superpower creation that must sooner or later give way to the principle of equality among states. Some countries will argue in Geneva that the policy of nonproliferation is pure hypocrisy. In the abstract, much less than in its imperfect practice, the NPT regime cannot be expected to last if this view is correct.

In the abstract, however, it is quite possible to justify nuclear inequality. Imagine that an international security conference convened without publicity and that the diplomats did not know in advance which countries they would represent. If they knew nothing of world politics today or of the probable consequences of acquiring nuclear weapons, they might reason that if sovereign states have an equal right to self-defense, then either all or none should have nuclear weapons. But if they were informed that, in current circumstances, the efforts to create either of these two conditions might significantly increase the risk of nuclear war, they may well, under certain conditions, accept nuclear inequality. Such conditions might include: the limitation of nuclear weapons use to self-defense; the unusually careful treatment of such weapons in order to reduce risk of use; some compensation for non-nuclear-weapons states that preserves their independence and benefits created by the nuclear balance of power; and concrete steps to reduce the risks—particularly to third parties—of reliance on nuclear deterrence,

including weapons dismantlement when circumstances permit. In other words, the abstract justification for the uneven possession of nuclear weapons would depend on the existence of limits on ends and means, as well as on continued attention to the relative risks created by deterrence and its alternatives.

Treaties, Norms, and Taboos

In fact, the current nonproliferation regime closely resembles such an imaginary compact. Notwithstanding their equal right to self-defense, the great majority of sovereign non-nuclear-weapons states—121 to be precise—have adhered to the NPT. The treaty creates two categories of states: five that are recognized as nuclear weapons states and the rest, which promise not to follow suit. The treaty, notably, also involves two articles that imply compensation and risk reduction: Article IV, which mandates assistance in the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and Article VI, which requires the nuclear weapons states to take steps toward disarmament. Moreover, in various U.N. forums the superpowers have made limited pledges not to use nuclear weapons to threaten non-nuclear-weapons states unless the latter are acting in accord with other weapons states. In this vein, during the Falkland/Malvinas war, Great Britain made no nuclear threats against non-nuclear Argentina. Nor did the United States seriously consider the use of nuclear weapons to avert its defeat by non-nuclear North Vietnam. Such behavior, of course, derived from prudence more than from U.N. resolutions. Nonetheless, it reinforces a strong taboo against using these weapons that has lasted for 40 years. At the same time, the superpowers have made little progress toward the arms reductions called for in Article VI, and some analysts argue that this "vertical proliferation" will soon justify horizontal proliferation.

But as the Vietnam example reveals, the current nonproliferation regime of treaties, norms, and taboos rests not only on formal and abstract considerations, but also on self-interest and prudence. Even though superpower compliance with Article VI of the NPT

has been inadequate, many states will continue to adhere because they believe their security will be diminished if more states—particularly their regional rivals—obtain nuclear weapons. The treaty helps them by providing for international inspections by the IAEA to assure that ostensibly peaceful nuclear programs are not being used to develop weapons. And many states realize that the robust deterrence postures created by the two superpowers have discouraged many of the 40-odd states that possess nuclear technology today from building nuclear weapons. The credibility of the nuclear umbrella extended by Washington and Moscow over their allies is a major reason why proliferation has been much slower than Kennedy feared.

These calculations have not impressed the handful of major nuclear threshold countries—such as Argentina, Brazil, India, Israel, Pakistan, and South Africa—that have rejected the NPT. They consider it unacceptably discriminatory and hypocritical for the superpowers to maintain weapons denied to other states. Moreover, some analysts argue that the superpowers are wrong to try to stop others from gaining access to nuclear weapons technology. They contend that just as the existence of nuclear weapons has produced prudence that has stabilized the U.S.-Soviet relationship, the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries would stabilize regional rivals. A world of nuclear porcupines would be a more cautious world.

Other things being equal, this argument might have some merit. But other things are not equal, and contrary to the rhetoric that will be heard in Geneva, nuclear inequality has nothing to do with racism on the part of weapons states or with the irrationality that some claim to see in Third World leaders. The key difference between weapons and nonweapons states concerns the possibility that deterrence will fail. Although superpower relations and arsenals create this risk also, it is likely to be much higher in most regional situations because of the shaky political conditions found in most states seeking nuclear weapons as well as their limited experience with nuclear command and control systems.

These risks are even greater in the early stages of a nuclear program, when new weapons are tempting and vulnerable targets for pre-emptive attack. The frequency of civil wars and overthrown governments in these countries, their embryonic procedures for civil control of the military, and their shortage of advanced electronic safety locks and secure battlefield communications networks all indicate that the danger of nuclear weapons use by new proliferators far exceeds that embedded in the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Nonproliferation is not an inconsistent or hypocritical policy if it is based on impartial and realistic estimation of relative risks.

For the present, most states are likely to accept some ordered inequality in weaponry because anarchic equality appears more dangerous.

Some might argue that a nonweapons state nonetheless has every moral and legal right in today's anarchic world to accept large risks. But the decision to build a nuclear weapon can impose significant new risks on third parties. If new proliferators are more likely to use nuclear weapons—even inadvertently—the breaking of a 40-year nuclear taboo becomes that much more likely, as does the chance that others might be drawn into the nuclear conflict. The inadequacies of the new proliferators' procedures for controlling weapons or weapons-usable fuels, such as plutonium or highly enriched uranium, multiply the chances that terrorists will steal nuclear devices. And finally, one must reckon with the simple but plausible proposition that the more nuclear weapons proliferate, the greater the prospects for accidental use and the greater the difficulty in eventually establishing controls and reducing the role of nuclear weapons in world politics.

Yet if the superpowers have the right to hold potential proliferators responsible for the likely effects of their actions on third parties, third countries may hold the superpowers

similarly accountable. And the superpowers have not adequately fulfilled the obligations imposed on them by the nonproliferation regime. Even though the regime does not rest primarily on Article VI of the NPT, this American and Soviet failure could ultimately contribute to its collapse. Nevertheless, the key role played by their alliance guarantees in stemming proliferation indicates that their Article VI obligations cannot be interpreted as simple disarmament.

Stabilizing Deterrence

The relation between nonproliferation and other arms control regimes is not as simple as it first appears. Ironically, the superpowers have seen deterrence stabilize even as their arsenals have greatly expanded. Over time, their high levels of weaponry have instilled prudence in their relationship and permitted their allies to eschew the nuclear option. Changes in the balance that allies perceive as weakening the credibility of deterrence not only threaten the stability of the central relationship, they also reduce the sense of security that helps slow the pace of proliferation. Paradoxically, under many circumstances the introduction of a single bomb in some non-nuclear states may be more likely to lead to nuclear use than the addition of a thousand more warheads to the U.S. and Soviet stockpiles.

On the other hand, professing indifference to the superpower nuclear arms relationship can weaken the nonproliferation regime in two ways. First, a disdain for the arms control institutions and concerns expressed by nonweapons states can aggravate the discrimination issue that is a central problem in nonproliferation policy. Second, nuclear doctrines and deployments that stress the military usefulness of nuclear weapons may help bolster deterrence, but they also tend to make nuclear weapons look more attractive to others. If states that have deliberately eschewed nuclear weapons see them treated increasingly like conventional defensive weapons, they may one day reconsider their decisions. In short, the relation between nonproliferation and general nuclear arms control efforts will re-

quire the nuclear states to be sensitive to both issues.

The idea of a comprehensive test ban (CTB) treaty became the ultimate symbolic issue of the previous two NPT review conferences. But the prospect that the Reagan administration will pursue a CTB is virtually nil. The administration contends that a test ban would deprive defense planners of vital information about the reliability of the stockpile and about the effects of nuclear radiation on new systems. And U.S. officials claim to doubt that such an accord could be verified. In addition, a CTB would hinder strategic modernization plans, including some elements of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

In the absence of serious CTB negotiations, superpower hopes of defusing charges of bad faith on Article VI will depend on whether the conferees feel optimistic about the other set of talks that will be under way in Geneva—over strategic arms. The American argument that the SDI is designed to rid the world of nuclear weapons and permit the implementation of Article VI is unlikely to carry much weight in either Geneva conference. Not only have scientists' doubts about a perfect defense been widely publicized, but also many countries know that without U.S.-Soviet agreement, unilateral defensive efforts are likely to reheat the offensive arms race. But whatever the short-run situation in September 1985, a perpetual increase in superpower arsenals can soon be expected to be perceived as inconsistent with the basic intuitive compact underlying the NPT, and eventually may undercut the regime. That is the serious long-term message that should not be lost as the nuclear states properly discount the exaggerated short-term rhetoric that will blare forth from Geneva.

Vertical proliferation, however, will not be the only source of acrimony at the review conference. Regional rivalries and charges against Israel and South Africa—both NPT nonsignatories—will be raised. Some will also charge that the supplier countries have not lived up to their full obligations under Article IV to assist developing countries' nuclear energy programs. Complaints are especially likely about the Nuclear Supplier Group Guide-

lines, published in 1978, which urge restraint in the export of sensitive facilities and equipment such as enrichment and reprocessing plants.

But these charges can be answered impartially by adopting an evolutionary approach to energy programs. As the International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation concluded in 1980, such technologies make little economic sense for countries with modest nuclear programs. Yet they could provide capabilities that would contravene the purposes of the treaty. Such transfers to larger programs may properly be considered in the context of a region's stability and of the susceptibility of the technology to safeguards. Yet few such national programs exist, and they are unlikely to generate much friction at the conference.

Moreover, the NPT is only part of what is needed for an effective nonproliferation policy. Bilateral diplomacy, cooperation among suppliers, coordination with the Soviet Union, efforts to induce second-tier suppliers—including China—to observe the guidelines, improvements in IAEA safeguards, and studies of the sanctions best able to respond to the next case of proliferation are merely a few of the critical elements of a successful policy. But maintaining the NPT regime will remain at the heart of an effective policy.

The question still remains of how long the great majority of states possessing nuclear technology will abjure nuclear weaponry. Obviously, political and technical trends will shift over time, but the prospects that proliferation may destabilize many regions, that nuclear weapons will not enhance the security of many states, and that superpowers will not fully escape proliferation's effects all generate a strong common international interest in the nonproliferation regime. For the present, most states are likely to accept some ordered inequality in weaponry because anarchic equality appears more dangerous.

Realistically, an international regime does not need perfect adherence to have a significant constraining effect any more than domestic laws require an end to deviant behavior in order to be effective. Nevertheless, there is a tipping point beyond which the accumulated

weight of violations will upset today's balance of nuclear incentives and disincentives. Moreover, the police function is traditionally the domain of the great powers in international politics. If their preoccupation with the competitive issues in their relationship distracts them from this responsibility, the proliferation balance could approach this tipping point.

The consequences of further proliferation cannot be confidently predicted. The answer depends in part on the variables "who" and "when." Stable deterrence might be possible in some regions. And the rate of spread makes a big difference. The slower the pace of proliferation, the easier it will be to manage its destabilizing effects and contain the risk of nuclear use. Still, given the dangers of increased risks of nuclear use that would follow any proliferation, it would be wise to err on the safe side and try to prevent it.

A good, impartial case can be made for a strong nonproliferation policy, but it is important to remember that the obligations bind in two directions. Although much of the rhetoric of the NPT review conference will be exaggerated and will not necessarily indicate an imminent collapse, ignoring it completely would be foolish. Hidden among the excesses will be an important message about global security in the longer term of the nuclear age.