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On Deterrence, Defense and Arms Control: In Honor of Colin S. Gray

Foreword by Keith B. Payne

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

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Table of Contents

Foreword*

This *Occasional Paper* presents articles by the late, world-renowned scholar, Professor Colin S. Gray, co-founder of the National Institute for Public Policy. His articles presented in this compilation are either previously-unpublished or not widely distributed, and are as thoughtful and pertinent now as when first written.

For five decades Colin Gray's scholarly writings contributed tremendously to our understanding of strategy and his wise counsel benefited U.S. security policies enormously. His intellectual depth, rigor, curiosity and wit were unparalleled, as was the time, energy and stamina he devoted to writing and lecturing. To say that Colin was prolific is a profound understatement. His scholarly published canon includes more than 30 books and 300 articles. He also authored or contributed to scores of unpublished reports for various U.S. government offices. To achieve such a record, Colin often would work on multiple texts simultaneously.

The scope and breadth of Colin's curiosity and writing far transcended any single topic. This brief compilation is only a glimpse of his scholarly interests: deterrence theory, policy and associated strategic force considerations, including arms control. To summarize the scope and nuance of Colin's views on strategic deterrence and related issues would require a sizeable book, which undoubtedly will be written. The much more modest goal here, however, is to provide a readable and select cross section of his basic points and positions, which were driven by his philosophic realism and a relentless dedication to logic and evidence—wherever that led.

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* adapted from: Keith B. Payne, "On Deterrence, Defense and Arm Control: In Honor of Colin S. Gray," *Information Series*, No. 461 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, June 17, 2020).

Colin coined the title "Second Nuclear Age" for the post-Cold War era—nomenclature that was subsequently adopted internationally. More than just a new name, this descriptor reflected his countercultural view that nuclear weapons would *not* lose their salience post-Cold War, i.e., the emerging era would be different, but nuclear weapons would continue to cast a long shadow over international security concerns. He also then observed that the return of Russia as a politico-military challenge to the West (which he fully expected) "immediately would threaten independent Ukraine [and] the Baltics."[1] Colin expected that the immediate post-Cold War period was a (likely brief) interlude before another cycle of sharp great power competition and potential conflict. Recent history demonstrates that Colin was, of course, correct, if unfashionable, in this regard.

Beginning in the 1970s, Colin played an increasingly significant role in the evolution of U.S. thinking. Very few scholars inside or outside of government have so directly affected U.S. policies. His highest scholarly priority was to understand how best to prevent nuclear war, and he was convinced that seeking to think through the question of what-to-do in the event of deterrence failure was both prudent and could improve the prospects for deterring war.

In summary, a review of Colin Gray's work reveals how easily he moved simultaneously in the two very different and often mutually exclusive worlds of academia and government policy. His scholarship, over time, led to the betterment of U.S. policy in a number of areas, but no more so than in the seemingly arcane and incredibly consequential arenas of deterrence, defense and arms control. Colin's ideas and writings were his currency for these developments. He was an advisor who spoke "truth to power" with great effect. It is no overstatement to

[1] Colin S. Gray, *The Second Nuclear Age* (London: Lynn Reiner Press, 1999), pp. 39-41.

conclude that the West is a safer place for his remarkable scholarship.

Keith B. Payne
National Institute for Public Policy

Understanding the Arms Race*

As Albert Wohlstetter[1] has argued, employment of the term arms race to characterize the Soviet-American military relationship of the past twenty years misleads as much as it informs. Hoverer, it is a fact that the world at large, with some justification, believes there to be, extant, a "nuclear arms race." In macroscopic terms, at least, this belief is not unreasonable.

- The United States and the Soviet Union have identified each other as their principal adversary.
- Each country is almost desperately attentive to the course, and detail of the arms programs of the other.
- Each country attends carefully to its relative position on the multi-level military balance.

These three facts do not qualify the Soviet-American military relationship as an arms race. Unfortunately, many of the pejorative connotations of "arms race" are all too lightly attached to Soviet- American military rivalry, notwithstanding the absence of supporting evidence.[2] Arms races tend to be associated, popularly, with the risk of war; they also tend to be viewed as an expensive exercise in futility (a particularly mindless mechanistic model of arms race dynamics still attracts a great many commentators).

Insofar as history offers any general wisdom on the subject, it is to the unhelpful effect that some wars have been

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* Original publication: Colin S. Gray, "Understanding the Arms Race," *Information Series*, No. 125, September 1982 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy).

1 See His *Legends of the Arms Race*, USSI Report 75-1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Strategic Institute, 1975).

2 See Jacek Kugler and A.F.K. Organski, with Daniel Fox, "Deterrence and he Arms Race: The Impotence of Power," *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Spring 1980), pp. 105-31.

preceded by arms races and some have not.[3] A fundamental theoretical problem that awaits scholarly attention pertains to the identification of cases. States which envisage the possibility of fighting one another, naturally and responsibly seek to achieve or maintain a favorable relationship of military power. Since political rivalry very often is expressed, in part, in military rivalry—and since wars tend not to occur between states who had not considered each other as prospective enemies until the eleventh hour of peacetime—some historical juxtaposition of arms race and war is only to be expected. Notwithstanding the empirical knowledge claimed, and the theoretical ingenuity displayed, the possibility remains that arms races are more the invention of polemical writers and social scientists in search of cross-historical general theory, than they are genuinely identifiable event-sequences that do, or nay, have dynamics different from peacetime defense preparation as usual.

Heretical though the thought appears to be, it is worth considering the proposition that arms race theory has made so little progress in large part because the concept of an arms race is mainly metaphor. The confusion of metaphor and reality nay have encouraged Western arms controllers to seek what Robin Ranger has termed "technical," as opposed to "political"[4] arms control. Because arms controllers could conceive of an arms race system, to an important degree distinct from the framework of political relations, they came to believe that that system could be controlled in useful ways with only the most minimal reference to the political environment. Authoritative

[3] See Theresa C. Smith, "Arms Race Instability and War," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (June 1980), pp. 253-284.

[4] Robin Ranger, Arms and Politics, *1958-1978: Arms Control in a Changing Political Context* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979), particularly Chapter 1.

confirmation of this claim has been provided by Barry Blechman.

> The American theory of arms control would isolate such negotiations (SALT) from politics. In theoretical terms, arms limitation talks should be viewed as technical exercises, directed at constraining the risks which weapons themselves add to existing political conflicts. As those espousing arms control made no pretense of solving political conflicts through the negotiations they proposed, they saw no relationship (other than that artificially instilled by politicians) between progress or lack of progress in settling underlying sources of conflict and progress or lack of progress in arms negotiations.[5]

Blechman proceeds to notice that "[i]n practice, however, the United States has closely linked movement in arms control with broader political accommodations with the Soviet Union." Nonetheless, the practice of 11 linkage11 admitted,[6] the fact remains that the political roots of competitive arms behavior continue to escape the attention of American policy-makers. Where many theorists of arms racing, and many policy proponents masquerading as arms race theorists,[7] have erred, has been in focusing far too

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[5] Barry Blechman, "Do Negotiated Arms Limitations Have a Future?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Fall 1980), p. 105.

[6] See Gerard Smith, *Doubletalk: The Story of the First Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), pp. 25-26; Michael Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons*, 1946-1976 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 199-200; and Henry Kissinger's prepared statement in U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *The SALT II Treaty, Hearings*, Part 3, 96th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, DC, USGPO, 1979), particularly pp. 171-173, 165.

[7] Arms race theory of the simple (and incorrect) action-reaction kind was deployed in 1968-70 to oppose ABM and MRV, just as it has been

heavily upon the putative interactive traffic in the alleged arms race system. Indeed, the very concept of a largely autonomous arms race system encourages a quest for the military dynamics of military interaction.

Scholars of Soviet-American relations tend to be ignorant of the precise historical detail of the process of genesis of a weapon system in the United States, and profoundly (and, by and large, excusably) ignorant with reference to Soviet program details. This is a subject where broad-brush characterization, deduced from first principles, can lead one astray all too easily.[8]

Consider the likely impact of the following first principles upon one's understanding of the dynamics of arms competition and the prospects for negotiated restraint:

- The defense programs of each side are, and can be, greatly influenced by perceptions of the other side's programs—actual, anticipated, and possible.
- Both sides would like to reduce the burden of resource allocation for defense.
- The larger, and more dynamic, the defense programs of the two sides, the greater the policy influence of defense-minded hard-line officials.
- Both sides would like to be able to negotiate a plateau in weaponry, or at least to be able to set some "cap on the arms race," so that strategic predictability is enhanced—permitting both governments to deny requests for programs that plainly would provide "excessive" capability. '

deployed of late to oppose MX/MPS. For example, not to the unexamined action-reaction premise which permeates Peter D. Zimmerman, "Will MX Solve the Problem?", *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 1980), pp. 7-9.

[8] I am grateful to my former colleague, Norman Friedman, for pointing out to me the many misassessments of alleged technical-strategic motives that Western naval analysts have (falsely) discerned with references to Soviet and American naval shipbuilding programs.

The above very short list encapsulates much of the theoretical, first-principle baggage with which the United States government conducted SALT and its end of the arms competition through much of the 1970s.[9] Each of the four principles was true—for *the United States*. None of the four principles was true, or contained enough truth to be useful as a guide for policy, vis 'a vis the Soviet Union. It is difficult to improve on the words of Sun Tzu:

> Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.
>
> When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal.
>
> If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are certain in every battle to be in peril.[10]

To date, American policy-makers have not made adequate efforts to know the enemy, and even the level of American self-knowledge has left much to be desired. The arms race metaphor, aside from its unhelpful pejorative aspects, encourages scholars and officials to consider Soviet-American military relations apart from their local strategic-cultural soil.

Although this discussion is cast in terms highly critical of past United States nuclear-weapons and arms control policy, it should not be supposed that all, or even most, of the strong criticism of that policy (really policies) that has been voiced of recent years is any better grounded in

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[9] See John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973); Thomas Wolfe, *The START Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1979); Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); and Smith, *Doubletalk*.

[10] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (trans. Samuel B. Griffith) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), p. 84.

strategic-cultural realities than is the policy assailed. Just as one should not leap, with fashion, from a simple-minded theory of detailed inter-state action-reaction to a scarcely less simple-minded theory of *eigendynamik*, so one should not leap to precipitously from the erstwhile belief that the Soviet Union was in the process of converging upon the American theory of strategic stability (through the maintenance of *mutual* assured destruction capabilities),[11] to the conviction that the Soviet Union is on the high road heading, deliberately, for the goal of clear strategic superiority. All sides of the American nuclear-weapon policy debate are prone to project very American perspectives and concepts upon an alien, though not unfathomable, Soviet strategic culture.

Questions which underlie analysis of the Soviet-American arms race are the following: is there a sufficient basis of common interest for an arms control process to be able to achieve outcomes deemed at least minimally useful by the two sides? Even if a sufficient basis of common interest can be identified, what, and how strong, are the domestic political forces in the two superpowers likely to interdict the arms control process in a negative way? Finally, is it plausible to suggest that the future of arms control is likely to be as unimpressive—or short of "tangible accomplishments"—as its past, because of the very character of the Soviet Union? (In other words, to control the arms race do we need, first, to see a major change in the nature of the Soviet polity?)[12]

What drives Soviet-American military rivalry? The answer, at the macro level, is an antagonism that is part geopolitical, part ideological; while at the micro level, Soviet

[11] See Thomas W. Wolfe, "The Convergence Issue and Soviet Strategic Policy," in *RAND 25th Anniversary Volume* (Santa Monica, Cal. RAND 1973), particularly p. 149.

[12] If this is judged to be the case, then one can only be pessimistic about the future of arms control.

defense programs are driven very substantially by their own inertia and by a distinctively Soviet brand of bureaucratic politics.[13] Each country runs, or jogs, in the so-called arms race in a fashion to be expected given its very different political system.

Arms race model builders tend to err because they have not, by and large, recognized the critical importance of the "level of analysis" problem. As a result, apparently strong—and certainly superficially plausible-cases can be made both for the proposition that the superpowers may be likened to two swordsmen, thrusting and parrying, and for the proposition that there is so high a degree of autonomy in the arms programs of each side that the concept of an arms race is really very misleading. There is both value and error in all major schools of arms race analysis, so, rather than indulge in a protracted, essentially negative, exercises. in critical review, instead I offer the outline of a new model for the understanding of the arms competition. Perhaps the most difficult idea to communicate, though it is commonplace to pay lip-service to it, is that the two superpowers genuinely are different in their characteristic arms race behavior. Jonathan Steinberg, for example, has suggested that

> An arms race is, after all, an immense social, political, legal, and economic process. Its influences penetrate every corner of the societies involved, and its attendant manifestations are simply too complex to fit the standard categories

[13] See Norman Friedman, "The Soviet Mobilization Base," *Air Force Magazine*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (March 1979), pp. 65-71. A work of enduring value is Matthew P. Gallagher and Karl F. Spielmann, Jr., *Soviet Decision-Making for Defense: A Critique of U.S. Perspectives on the Arms Rate* (New York: Praeger, 1972). Also see: Karl F. Spielmann, *Analyzing Soviet Strategic Arms Decisions* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1978); and David Holloway, "Technology and Political Decision in Soviet Armaments Policy," *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4 (1974), pp. 257-279.

> of historical analysis. Even if the subject of study is only one of the participants in such a race, as is the case here [Imperial Germany], the number of elements in that nation's social, cultural, economic, and religious traditions which significantly affect the course of the arms race is very large.[14]

Anns race activity cannot be explained satisfactorily exclusively either in macro or in micro terms—both must be accommodated.

Elements of Theory

American understanding of the dynamics of the strategic arms race admittedly is rudimentary. Nonetheless, the past fifteen years have yielded some persuasive evidence.

- The Soviet defense establishment has moved in accordance with the quinquennial planning cycle established for all major economic endeavors. In short, the "Soviet war machine" lumbers rather than thrusts and parries in a nimble fashion.
- The Soviet defense effort, year in and year out, is moved much more by consideration of the overall level of the U.S. defense effort than by individual U.S. weapon programs.[15]
- There is an action-reaction mechanism in the arms competition, but it tends to operate at the macro, and very micro, levels, rather than at the level of particular major programs.[16]

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[14] Jonathan Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent: Tirpitz and the Birth of the German Battle Fleet* (London: MacDonald, 1965), p. 28.

[15] See Colin S. Gray, *The Soviet-American Arms Race* (Farnborough, Hants, [U.K.]: Saxon House, D.C. Heath, 1976), Chapter 4.

[16] See Andrew W. Hull, "Action-Reaction," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 197, No. 2 (February 1981), pp. 40-45.

In other words, major American defense budgetary shifts—*à la* Korea or, in minor key, even *à la* Reagan—eventually will be reflected in the level of Soviet defense allocations. Similarly, Soviet forces do, and will, attempt to respond effectively, tactically, to the very specific threats posed by particular U.S. weapon systems.

There can be no question b.1t that there is an arms race, even if the United States has chosen only to jog while the Soviet Union has been running. Critics of particular U.S. weapon programs tend to take very little, if any, account of the detail of our extant arms race wisdom. They are content merely to cite the fact that this or that system should catalyze a major Soviet response. Analyses highly critical of MX, for example, tend to proceed from summary denunciation straight into the range of logical alternatives supposedly open to the U.S.S.R. by way of responses.

While it is necessary and desirable to specify what Soviet defense planners might do to counter an American weapon system, it is necessary and desirable also to identify the leading Soviet stylistic elements in the conduct of the strategic arms race. For example, regardless of developments in U.S. posture and doctrine, Soviet military science (following the very general guidance of Soviet doctrine, i.e., grand strategy) prescribes an "assured survival" approach to nuclear war. Individual American strategic weapon systems, be they the Safeguard ABM or the MX ICBM, are appraised in Soviet perspective in terms of their likelihood of actual deployment and their operational meaning.

Safeguard and its immediate technological successors was dealt with effectively by the Soviet Union via the ABM. Treaty of 1972. This treaty served Soviet strategic-operational purposes—quite aside from any broader political motivations—in that it closed off an avenue of overt military high-technology competition wherein the U.S.S.R. was close to a decade behind the United States.

It is more likely than not that Soviet defense planners were far less confident than were U.S. defense scientists from MIT and Cal. Tech. that they could assuredly suppress and/or penetrate *Safeguard*. Examined in historical perspective, it is quite obvious that Soviet strategic programs have been designed far more for the prospective positive accomplishment of enduring strategic missions, than they have for the purpose of offsetting, or negating, particular American capabilities.

Some American arms race theorists chose to deploy a simple action-reaction model of the arms race in order to demonstrate how- foolish it would be for the United States to deploy the *Safeguard* ABM. That opinion was proved correct in that the Soviet Union did choose to deploy strategic forces admirably well suited to defeat *Safeguard*, save only for the fact that *Safeguard* deployment effectively was aborted by the ABM Treaty of 1972. In retrospect, it appears to be the case that the doctrinal *leitmotiv* for Soviet strategic force development is a determination to effect counterforce success.[17] *Safeguard* was not a threat to Soviet urban/ industrial targeting; rather was it a threat to hard-target counterforce planning. '

SALT agreements, to date (actual and proposed), simply have recorded the extant strategic nuclear balance. A major reason why that process was placed on diplomatic "hold" in 1980-81 was because its achievements were either very modest or even negative in American assessment.[18] The Reagan Administration will resume the SALT/START

[17] John Erickson, "The Soviet Military System: Doctrine, Technology and 'Style'," in Erickson and E.J. Feuchtwanger, eds., *Soviet Military Power and Performance* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1979), particularly pp. 24-32.

[18] On the current "crisis of arms control," see Blechman, "Do Negotiated Arms Limitations Have a Future?," pp. 102-25; Christoph Bertram "Rethinking Arms Control," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Winter 1980/81), p. 352-65; and Richard Burt, "The Relevance of Arms Control in the 1980's," *Daedalus*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (Winter 181), pp. 159-77.

process in 1982, if only to accommodate NATO-European political pressures, but currently it lacks a plausible "theory of victory" in that process—pending the naturing of new weapon programs.[19]

As an instrument of arms race management, it is recognized officially today that SALT can only ratify what is, or what commonly is believed to be imminent. In short, there is no arms control alternative to strategic force planning for the alleviation of predictable arms race anxieties.[20] At root, the arms control processes of the 1970s (SALT and MBFR) foundered upon the fact that they were conducted on far too narrow a base of common interests.[21] Strategic doctrinal commonality was not required for arms control "success", but it is evident today that Soviet defense planners were not merely unpersuaded by Western theories of arms race and crisis stability; they were motivated, for good Russian/Soviet reasons, to pursue weapon deployments which actively would be subversive of the Western idea of stability. Yet again, and analogous with the political events of 1944-48, American policy-makers have been disciplined by the reality of Soviet behavior.

The twelve years, 1970-82, have seen American defense officials and commentators grope for a theory of arms race dynamics which would begin to fit the historical facts. It is known that the tight action-reaction theory propounded in the era of the "great ABM debate" (1969-70) is wrong, but what is right? The arms race (stability) arguments deployed to oppose *Safeguard* and MIRV plainly were largely devoid

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[19] See Colin S. Gray, "Wanted: An Arms Control Policy," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (February 1982), pp. 1-2, 8-9.

[20]. This thesis pervades *Defense Planning and Arms Control*, Proceedings of a Special NSAI Conference, June 1980 (Washington, DC: National Security Affairs Institute, National Defense University, USGPO, 1980).

[21] See Donald G. Brennan and Colin S. Gray, *Common Interests and Arms Control*, HT-3218-P (Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y. Hudson Institute, August 1980).

of merit—given the historical facts of Soviet strategic deployment 'behavior in the 1970s—so how does the strategic arms race "work"? It is useful to begin negatively: with explicit identification of propositions which have been shown by events to i.e., false. The following, incontestably, are not true:

- Soviet development and deployment of strategic weapons is driven by a determination to offset anticipated American counter-military prowess.
- Soviet strategic doctrine is dynamic and is open to innovative ideas bearing upon the strategic desirability of the preservation of a condition of mutual societal vulnerability.
- Soviet defense planners think systemically about the implications of their preferred strategic-force deployments for American decisions.

An observation made ten years ago by Johan Holst remains valid today: "We just do not have an adequate explanatory model for the Soviet-American arms race."[22] However, inadequate though the available explanatory models remain, the historical experience of Soviet strategic behavior in "the SALT era" of 1969-79 has yielded an evidential base for the derivation of propositions. These do not amount, as yet, to an "explanatory model," of the strategic arms race, but—in toto—they may merit ascription as promising pre-theory.

First, both superpowers develop and deploy weapons in accordance with the character of their separate national "strategic cultures."[23] In short, in the language of social

[22] "Comparative U.S. and Soviet Deployments, Doctrines, and Arms Limitation," in Morton A. Kaplan, ed., *SALT: Problems and Prospects* (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1973), p. 68.

[23] See Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, R-2154-AF (Santa Monica, Cal.: RAND, September 1977).

science, the Soviet-American arms race is subsystem dominant. There is, in practice, no *general* rationality to strategic posture; instead there are separate rationalities, given the local details of culture and politics.[24] American strategic theory in the 1950s and 1960s tended to be long on somewhat abstract deduction and rather short on concrete inductive historical reasoning. Expressed in the vernacular, each superpower has "done its own thing," in individual character.

Second, the national strategic cultures of the United States and the U. S.S.R. are sufficiently distinctive that neither has understood, or been able to respond empathetically to, the concerns of the other.[25] While the United States has held to a *leitmotiv* of stability, defined in terms of the total mutual vulnerability of societies and the very substantial mutual invulnerability of strategic weapon systems, the U.S.S.R. has sought enhanced security through the unilateral ability to assure state and national survival by means of a multi-level capability to limit damage. In the authoritative American view, damage limitation in war will be a function of intra-war deterrence, of a reciprocation.in targeting restraint. In the Soviet view, damage limitation will be enforced physically by the timely destruction of U.S. strategic-force assets, the disruption and destruction of U.S. command and control, and the physical protection of essential Soviet state values.

Third, it is "the Soviet wav" to maintain very large armed forces which express as well as enforce the will of the state, and to seek whatever degree of military preponderance foreign competitors permit (or cannot

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[24] For example, see Desmond Ball, *Politics and Force Levels: The Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

[25] See Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, HI-3362-PR (Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Hudson Institute, June 1981).

prevent). As a continental Great Power, with vulnerable frontiers and geographically proximate enemies, the Soviet Union is the historical heir to a tradition of military prudence that is fundamentally alien to such insular powers as Great Britain or the United States.

Fourth, stability on the home front is a cardinal tenet of Soviet 12 military doctrine. Soviet military programs are not turned on and off as theoretical whim or immediate political expediency appears to suggest to be desirable. The U.S.S.R. is a country governed economically on a five-year planning cycle. The action and reaction implied in some arms race theorizing implies an ability and a willingness to fine-tune weapon research, development and deployment in response to signals received from the arms race system. The Soviet economy does not function like that. Socialist planners are committed to the idea of full employment—and that includes weapon design bureaus and the manufacturing industrial sector which produces bombers, ICBMs end SSBNs.[26]

Fifth, the Soviet-American arms race is driven, at root, by the political antagonism which divides the two states. With reference to the founding political dogma, which rationalizes the very "right to rule" of the CPSU, Soviet leaders define the United States as an enemy. Aside from ideology, geopolitics or *realpolitik* informs Soviet leaders that the United States is the principal external energy capable at present of denying the Soviet Union control, or *contrôle*,[27] over the whole of Eurasia- Africa. The more advantageous the multi-level East-West military balance is

[26] On this subject see Arthur J. Alexander, *Decision-Making in Soviet Weapons Procurement, Adelphi Papers*, Nos. 147-148 (London, IISS, Winter 1978/9).

[27] The French *contrôle* means general supervision, by way of some contrast to the more rigorous implications of the English word control.

in the Soviet favor, the greater the political freedom of action enjoyed by Soviet leaders.[28]

Sixth, Soviet foreign policy—and the military capability which supports it—is a captive of the "dynamics of empire."[29] Soviet political power must expand, as logically must the military capability supporting it, because the Soviet government is the insecure suzerain of an empire wherein every "holding" depends upon every other "holding". The Great Russian core area of Muscovy and Byelorussia is protected (and threatened) by nearly four centuries of imperial land grabbing which, in its turn after 1945, has come to be protected in the West by the Eastern European marches of East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. The outermost fringes of empire (be it Roman, British, French or Russian/Soviet) are always threatened by states or tribes beyond the imperial frontiers. In short, Soviet power at hone is not secure without control of Eastern Europe; and control of Eastern Europe is not secure without control, or perhaps *contrôle*, of Western Europe. If this imperial argument is true, it tears a very cautionary tale for those in the West who seek to establish an East-West military relationship guided by some rough facsimile of the concept of strategic stability.

Seventh, the United States has never had a settled arms-race strategy: the U.S. has functioned almost as a "wild card" in the competition. The United States, on the

[28] See Benjamin S. Lambeth, "The Political Potential of Soviet Equivalence," *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fall 1979), pp. 22-39; and Dimitri K. Simes, "Deterrence and Coercion in Soviet Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Winter 1980/81).

[29] See Colin S. Gray, "The Most Dangerous Decade: Historic Mission, Legitimacy, and Dynamics of the Soviet Empire in the 1980s," *Orbis*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring 1981), pp. 13-28; and Rebecca V. Strode and Colin S. Gray, "The Imperial Dimension of Soviet Military Power," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XXX, No. 6 (November-December 1981), pp. 1-15.

historical evidence of 1945-82, has surged its defense effort in response to particular sequences of "security shocks" (the invasion of South Korea in 1950; the "missile gap" of 1957~61; and, most recently, the invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979), and then has coasted on the budgetary surfeit temporarily provided until the next "shock" galvanizes a popular political reaction which cannot be denied. To date, it is accurate to claim that the American people have never been told that the Soviet Union poses, prospectively, a *permanent* problem. While the U.S. coasts and surges, and coasts again, the U.S.S.R. pursues its defense program business in a near steady-state mode.

Eighth, turning, or decision, points in the strategic arms race are political rather than military-technical. The across-the-board improvement in Soviet military capability is impressive when assessed in a long-term cumulative vein (i.e, in 1982 as opposed to 1972), not when assessed year to year.[30] The Soviet arms race challenge is assayed by the United States in political, not military, terms. The electorates of democracies tend not to be moved by annual military briefings which explain that the Soviet Union is doing better this year that which she was doing last year. Democracies, at the level of public opinion and pressure on policymakers, are moved by dramatic political events.

Ninth, the quality of arms-race systemic sensitivity between the superpowers is low. Given that a genuinely new strategic weapon technology tends to require a canonical five-to-ten year period to progress from drawing board to silo, submarine, or airfield, it is scarcely surprising that the agile thrust and parry of the archtypical liberal arms race theorist is not well represented in the annals of the Soviet-American arms race. Quite aside from the truly major problems of domestic doctrinal-bureaucratic-

[30] See John Collins, *U.S. Soviet Military Balance: Concepts and Capabilities, 1960-1980* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980).

industrial inertia confronted by both superpowers, there remains the significant difficulty of the moving target. In other words, the Soviet, or American, strategic program which I plan to confound may not actually exist, or exist in anything close to operational detail, for the better part of ten years. For example, pity the poor Soviets in 1980-82. The Main Operations Directorate of the General Staff wishes to suggest the optimum means for countering U.S. MX ICEM deployment, but the protracted indecision .in the U.S. defense community has denied the General Staff a fixed target. Even if each side wanted to, and was capable of fine-tuned arms-race thrusting and parrying, the tec1mical-industrial reality of extended lead-tines would frustrate that endeavor.

The nine propositions specified above have, *in toto*, major implications for the arms race consequences of particular weapon systems. All too often, opponents of a weapon posit an American-style Soviet arms race opponent who is willing and able rapidly to shift defense preparation gears in order to pose a total threat to it.

The Action-Reaction Hypothesis

Arms-race analysis in the West continues to be afflicted by theorists seeking to identify patterns of arms-program interaction. It is my contention that, although each superpower has sought to be responsive in a broad and general way to trends in the evolution of the military capabilities of its principal rival, there has been very little detailed action and reaction. Because of the near-total absence of direct evidence on the motives behind individual Soviet weapon programs, this author and the scholars who he is criticizing, are driven, more often than not, to argue by technical inference.

While it would probably be an error to assert that Soviet defense programs are insensitive to perceived and

anticipated threats, the historical facts of the period 1964-1982 (the Brezhnev leadership period, to date) suggest that a claim for the very substantial autonomy of the Soviet defense effort (*vis à vis* changes in the level of the American defense effort) is unlikely to be far off the mark. In that extensive period, the rate of increase in the level of the Soviet defense effort roughly coincided with t h e rate of increase in the growth of the soviet economy.[31] It is possible to argue that the absolute decline in the level of the American defense effort (until quite recently) has encouraged the Soviet Union to compete more vigorously, but that argument lacks for evidence in its support—notwithstanding both its logical appeal, and its apparent fit with the facts. In Harold Brown's words:

> As our defense budgets have risen, the Soviets have increased their defense budget. As our defense budgets have gone down, their defense budgets have increased again.[32]

In short, the rest two decades offer a happy playground for statisticians eager to establish positive and negative correlations. In practice, as is known from American weapon program histories, much of the detail of a particular program is negotiated for reasons, and to conclusions, that

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[31] At least as averaged over the years. Typically, as best we can judge, the Soviet defense effort in the Brezhnev period has registered roughly a 4 percent rate of real growth each year. Such a rate was somewhat below the rate of growth in Soviet GNP in the better years of the 1960s, is somewhat above the rate of growth of the late 1970s, and is *well above* the expected rate of growth of Soviet GNP in the early to mid-1980s. As the Soviet Union enters a period of rate of economic growth averaging, say, 2-2½ percent *per annum*, unless one is willing to predict a Soviet willingness to contract the scale of its military programs, then one has to conclude that the expectations, if not the actual living standards, of the Soviet consumer will have to suffer.

[32] *Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1980* (Washington, DC: USGPO, January 25, 1979), p. 6.

have little or nothing to do with the anticipation of external threat. President Carter's MX, multiple protective structure (MPS) system, for example, with its "baseline" configuration of 200 MX missiles and 4600 shelters, certainly was defensible—and indeed, had to be defended—in terms of the Soviet threat, but the Soviet threat did not drive the determination of the basic parameters of the system. The figure of 200 MX ICEMs was a compromise number negotiated between the Air Force and Senator Macintyre of the Senate Amed Services Committee. The Senator was opposed to a force size too obviously capable of posing a credible first-strike threat to Soviet silo-based ICBM.[33]

Because the lead-tine for a major strategic weapon system is on the order of ten years (or longer—to full operational capability [FOC], neither superpower can act and react in the mechanical, deft manner suggested by some arms control theorists. In other words, so many are the technical, budgetary, political, and (in the Unites States' case) even basic doctrinal hazards facing a weapon program over its very long gestation period, that it simply is not possible to react to Soviet offensive or defensive developments. How could the United States, in 1982, react with a new weapon program to a Soviet weapon program anticipated for the period 1990-2000?[34]

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[33] For a comprehensive study of the MX/MPS program, See Colin S. Gray, *The MX ICBM and National Security* (New York: Praeger, 1981).

[34] For several years it has been argued that the U.S. cruise missile program would drive the U.S.S.R. to a massively expensive, offsetting air defense deployment. While the Soviet Union undoubtedly will endeavor to optimize its tactical efficacy against the cruise missile threat, U.S. officials tended to neglect to point out that the Soviet Union has long been committed to the orderly modernization of a massive air defense capability and that the scale of Soviet resource allocation to PVO-Strany is probably close to unaffected by predictions of the fate of individual U.S. weapon programs.

Aside from the truly major uncertainties of strategic intelligence predictions for a decade hence—the lead-time pertinent to major weapon program evolution—each party to the arms competition has unique foreign policy duties to perform, very individual strategic preferences to express (in weaponry and C3I), and very particular domestic-process considerations to accommodate. In short, American officials and extra-official commentators cannot sensibly support or oppose a particular weapon program, be it MX, LoADS or whatever, on the grounds "that the Soviet Union will respond as follows..."[35]

Close study of such Soviet evidence as there is available suggests that the Soviet Union strives to achieve maximum prospective combat effectiveness (in the interest of proletarian internationalism, deterrence, and plain common sense), but that also it is devoted to the preservation of stability on the home military-industry front. Major changes in resource allocation for defense *vis à vis* non-defense programs, or even between defense programs, are very expensive in the Soviet system. An economy centrally planned on a series of five-year cycles is not the most agile of vehicles for the conduct of an arms competition supposedly characterized by an action-reaction process. The more that is learned of Soviet defense industry, and that remains all too little, the less convincing becomes the image of a Soviet defense establishment willing and able to conduct a process of deft thrusts and parries in the strategic arms con-petition. One should be prepared to believe that

[35] In 1980, Admiral Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, waged a campaign, via the national intelligence estimates, to dissuade the president from continuing with MX/MPS. The CIA, allegedly, predicted a Soviet "response" to MX/MPS at the high end of the possible threat range, surprising well in excess of 20,000 ICPM warheads. The basis for this estimate range was, very largely, (CIA) strategic logic—it was not Soviet evidence. See Richard Burt, "Soviet Nuclear Edge in Mid-80s Is Envisioned by U.S. Intelligence," *The New York Times*, May 13, 1980, p. Al2.

the Soviet defense system, writ large, is capable of "lurching" in step-level jumps, given sufficient notice. In other words, should an American administration decide to raise the level of American defense expenditure by, say, fifty or one hundred percent, one should expect the Soviet defense machine to react. However, one should not expect the Soviet defense machine to react directly, in detail to the new United States' defense program, and neither should one assume that the Soviet Union necessarily could react—even in a gross fashion—as some action-reaction theorists tend to imply. It is not obvious that the Soviet Union could much increase the output of its high-technology industry for defense functions.[36]

A Soviet Union devoted to the improvement in its military condition at all levels easily lends itself to misassessment by Western theorists. Where Western theorists are inclined, by strategic culture, to see purposeful design, one should perhaps see only prudence (defined in Soviet terms). Benjamin Lambeth has offered the relevant thought that

> [i]t would probably not be overly facetious to suggest that for Soviet military planners, the favored measure of strategic sufficiency is the notion that "too much is not enough".[37]

The Soviet Union has not imposed a condition of strategic inferiority on the United States. Such a condition, if it exists,[38] is the product of steady momentum, or perhaps

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[36] It is only fair to point out that the U.S. defense community is divided in its assessment of Soviet mobilization potential *vis à vis* defense high technology. A useful discussion is Abraham S. Becker, "On the Politics and Economics of the Burden of Soviet Defense," unpublish paper (RAND), May 1980.

[37] Benjamin Lambeth, *How to Think About Soviet Military Doctrine*, P-5939 (Santa Monica, Cal.: RAND, February 1978), p. 7.

[38] The strategic balance is notoriously difficult to measure. Today, and for the next several years, I do not believe that the United States could

just inertia, in Soviet weapon programs, and an enduring deficiency in American attendance upon its strategic-force survival problems. The current crisis in the survivability of the American ICBM force is not the result of a dramatic Soviet arms race challenge, nor need it be read as clear evidence signifying Soviet determination to achieve strategic superiority. Indeed, even to frame the problem in that way probably is to impose a very un-Soviet mode of thinking upon the Soviet defense establishment.[39]

Believing that war can occur, and that the quantity and quality of defense preparation (considered expansively) can make the difference between victory .and defeat, but all the while hoping that a direct military clash with the United States can be avoided,[40] the Soviet Union has pursued an orderly, affordable, program of military modernization across the board of capabilities. Soviet effort with respect to strategic offensive forces has been extraordinary in relation to other military programs, a fact which may be explained by reference to the comparative disadvantage of the U.S.S.R. in high-technology defense research, development, and production, and to the extraordinary significance of strategic nuclear weapon systems in the structure of

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wage acute crises or wars with the U.S. S. R. and secure her foreign policy goals. This has to translate into strategic inferiority—"soft" though the reasoning admittedly has to be. There is no magic metric or yardstick which can inform the U.S. defense community as to whether or not its programs are sufficient.

[39] It is far from obvious that the U.S.S.R. recognizes a concept of strategic superiority outside the enveloping framework of the correlation of forces. See Seweryn Bialer, *Stalin's Successors: Leadership, Stability, and Change in the Soviet Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 241-253.

[40] In Paul Nitze's words: "The Kremlin leaders do not want war; they want the world." "Strategy in the Decade of the 1980s," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Fall 1980), p. 90.

Western strategy.[41] While Western analysts may well overprice some of the more manpower-intensive military capabilities of the U.S.S.R., they almost certainly underprice Soviet strategic-nuclear programs.[42]

As an arms race participant, the Soviet Union appears not to be racing to achieve any particular relationship of power, unless an appreciation of the political and military benefits of a growing (though necessarily fragile) preponderance may be so characterized. The Soviet Union, driven both by paranoid fears and by the general belief that coercive power is always useful, can never be satisfied that it has "enough" or "sufficient" military power. In a very dogged, steady, manner—the Soviet defense establishment makes, by and large, marginal improvements in its capabilities, year after year.[43] Insofar as can be discerned it is not performing at all consciously in a particular pattern of action and reaction (of any kind). The enemy is clearly identified, Soviet military science provides a stability of guidance for strategic direction, so—undramatically—the Soviet Union improves its ability to wage war, and hence enforce a deterrent condition, year by year. The fragility to which brief reference was made parenthetically above, lies in the inherent, structural limitations of Soviet high-technology industry. Soviet officials know very well that they could not win or even sustain a rough parity in a high-technology arms competition with the United States. In other words, although American carelessness may have

[41] See Henry Kissinger, "The Future of NATO," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Autumn, 1970), p. 6

[42]. And perhaps not only strategic-nuclear programs. ZSU-23-4 anti-aircraft and guns and BMP infantry combat vehicles also have been judged to be relatively more expensive for the Soviet Union than the U.S. (with reference to U.S. counterparts) to produce. See Collins, *U.S.-Soviet Military Balance: Concepts and Capabilities, 1960-1980*, p. 83.

[43] The U.S.S.R. has provided, and is providing, a near-classical illustration of this thesis with its year by year improvement in what, generically, is termed the fourth generation of its ICBMs.

yielded them an advantage in the central nuclear balance, narrowly defined, in the 1980s, they cannot—and probably do not—expect that carelessness to continue for much longer.

The model of the arms competition implicit in the above discussion should have an impact upon Western debate over arms control policy. To summarize, the Soviet arms-race/arms-control adversary-partner has the following essential characteristics:

- A total, though long-term, commitment to the demise of Western governments. Detente, or even near-entente (as in the current phase of Sino-American relations), has to be solely a matter of tactical convenience.
- Both a geopolitical (*realpolitik*) and an ideological antipathy to the "maritime alliance" which continues to deny it a total imperium over Eurasia.
- A very Russian, and certainly non-Western (and even premodern), suspicion of foreign ideas and, indeed, of any alien elements that are not controlled by Moscow.
- A commitment, born of historical understanding and ideology, to global instability (in Western terms). Relationships of power and influence are not stable, they are dynamic, and the Soviet Union/Russia has learned at first hand what apparent weakness can cost.
- A commitment to offer the most effective defense feasible should war occur. Soviet defense programs are not guided, or inhibited, by any consideration of strategic stability that would be familiar to Western theorists.
- A stable doctrine, a stable strategy, and a commitment to orderly, stable, defense programs. This is not to deny the probable fact of inter-service rivalry having a biasing effect upon the evolution

> of quite broad categories of Soviet defense capabilities (for example, consider the shifting fortunes of Soviet Long Range Aviation), but it is to suggest that the Soviet defense effort, as a whole, is not an instrument capable of playing new tunes on little notice.

Interaction between Soviet and American defense capabilities tends, therefore: to be intermittent and necessarily somewhat broad in its effects at the higher levels of policy direction; to be all but absent at the level of particular major program development (the region classically assumed to be driven by a tight pattern of action-reaction); and to be quite intensive at the sharp end of (tactical) operating detail. Consideration of the evolution of weapon programs from the early 1900s to the present day suggests a surprising degree of autonomy in national rationales. Whether it be with respect to *Dreadnoughts* and *Super-Dreadnoughts* prior to 1914, or to ABM, MIRV and MX in the 1960s and 1970s, the evidence (pertaining to the real detail of program genesis and evolution—as opposed to inferred strategic logic) of patterns of program interaction is, to be polite, extremely thin.

Conclusions

The argument presented immediately above may have major implications for United States' weapon programs and arms control policies, because · arms race stability is prominent among the defense and arms control objectives of the United States. Western theories of arms race stability posit a presumed relationship between "what we do" and how we anticipate the adversary to react. Most of the Western theoretical literature on arms race stability, because it does not rest upon a robust understanding of what drives the race, must simply be discarded.

The U.S.S.R. is committed irrevocably, by its basic character, to permanent struggle. The U.S.S.R. cannot become just another, though a rather unusually powerful, authoritarian state. The past and present sacrifices of the Soviet peoples have to be justified in terms of a historic mission. Not merely does the U.S.S.R. need a foreign enemy, but the ideology that legitimizes the Soviet state very conveniently identifies such an enemy. The only choice open to the United States is whether or not she will compete effectively with the U.S.S.R. There can be no peaceful settlement of basic differences with the Soviet state—a detente process can have no foreseeable end point of that kind. The arms race must continue until either the U.S.S.R. suffers domestic revolutionary change of a character ultimately benign to the security condition of others, or until there is a military decision between East and West. This is hardly pleasant news, and it is scarcely surprising that prominent American politicians have not shared this insight with their electorate. The relevance of this argument to the study is the long-term, really inalienable, nature of the problem to which it points. The roots and sustaining fuel of the Soviet-American arms race do not lie so much in the separate, very complex "domestic processes" which can be explored in detail by scholars of the bureaucratic-politics or Military-Industrial Complex (MIC) persuasion, rather do they lie in the particular political character of Soviet state power and in the facts of geopolitics.

Nuclear Deterrence and the Catholic Bishops*

Nuclear Realities

The author has no pretensions to expertise as a theologian. He is writing as a nuclear strategist who believes both that moral questions are relevant to our security policy, and that those questions have not been posed as directly or as insistently in the recent past as perhaps they should have been.

This paper discusses what the author believes to be the salient facts of the world as it is and the present nuclear strategy of the United States and then offers commentary on the Second Draft of the Pastoral Letter of the National Council of Catholic Bishops.

It is probably useful to begin by saying that, fierce though the rhetoric often is, contributors to the current nuclear policy debate generally are disagreeing on means rather than ends. There is no lobby for nuclear war, for limited nuclear war, or for protracted nuclear war. The abominable character of nuclear war is not an issue.[1]

It is less than obvious to this author quite how one contributes to peace if one reminds people (people in the *West* that is) that nuclear war would be terrible—as if everyone did not know that already—and then proclaims that we must abolish war in general, and nuclear war in particular. Vision and good intentions are cheap and easy

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* Original publication: Colin S. Gray, "Nuclear Deterrence and the Catholic Bishops," *Information Series*, No. 140 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, April 1983).

[1] See Colin S. Gray, "Issues and Non-Issues In The Nuclear Policy Debate," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 37, No. 10 (December 1981), pp. 47-69.

to come by. Virtually anyone, writing on the back of an envelope, can invent a world order superior in moral (and other) terms to the present one. Unfortunately, the currency of relevant policy debate is *not* imagination alone. How has one performed a noble service for peace, if he reminds people that "apocalypse now" is an ever-present possibility, tells them that there is a better world out there somewhere but lacks even the faintest glimmer of a half-way-plausible theory concerning how we are to proceed from here to there? Jonathan Schell has no advice on the transition to offer, and neither have the Catholic Bishops.[2] For reasons that this author has explained in detail elsewhere, the promise of arms control—on which the Second Pastoral Letter reposes such hope, if not faith—is not at all encouraging.[3] (The Catholic Bishops themselves, with their references to distrust, political hostility, and the illiberal character of the Soviet state, damn their own theory of transition from dependence upon an imperfect system of nuclear deterrence).[4]

Policy debate must at least begin with recognition of the world as it is, with all its dangerous imperfections. The paragraphs that follow present the most salient facts of nuclear reality.

First, nuclear weapons are here to stay; they cannot be disinvented. Humankind cannot return to an age of pre-nuclear innocence. Whether or not we have signed a Faustian Pact that one day must be redeemed remains an open question.

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[2] See Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Knopf, 1982); particularly Part III.

[3] Colin S. Gray, *Arms Control: Problems*, *Information Series* No. 132 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, January 1983).

[4] National Conference of Catholic Bishops Ad Hoc Committee on War and Peace, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response [Second Draft of Pastoral Letter]," *Origins, NC documentary Service*, Vol. 12 (October 28, 1982), p. 32. Hereafter cited as "Pastoral Letter."

Second, the super- and great powers will never agree to anything remotely close to total nuclear-disarmament. The reasons are all-too-obvious. A nuclear disarmed country would be open to blackmail by any Power that had hidden away a handful of nuclear weapons, or which produced a handful of such weapons in secret.

Third, countries build and maintain nuclear weapons for reasons that seem good to them. The Soviet Union finds nuclear armaments to be ideal weapons of political intimidation with respect to Western democracies, wherein the general public is a genuine player in policy decisions. In fact, one of the more persuasive cases for U.S. strategic superiority lies in this region of argument. The U.S. and the Soviet Union are very dissimilar in their vulnerability to intimidation, because of the differences in their political systems. It can be argued that the U.S. needs military compensation for the openness of her political life. Also, the West has found nuclear weapons very useful, if not essential, as a way of coping with the unfortunate facts of geography. For a host of geopolitical reasons, the Soviet Union has far easier access to important areas along the periphery of Eurasia than does the United States. Without nuclear threat, the structure of Western security probably would not work.

Fourth, a functioning nuclear deterrence system is critical to the tenuous international security order. Any of us can criticize the nuclear deterrence system as well as the Catholic Bishops can, but we should not forget that the current system is the only system that we have. Before we begin experimenting with bold new designs for "world order" and the like, let alone begin weakening the existing system, there had better be a very good story for the future. At the present time, there are no bold new *designs* for a better world that incorporate a plausible theory of how we proceed, *safely*, from here to there. The Bishop's letter posits *arms control* as the key, but history and the logic of inter-

state competition tell us that that is not going to work. Indeed, the Pastoral Letter does not even attempt to explain why arms control will accomplish in the future what it has failed to accomplish in the past. In short, if someone insists that we move from a here that "works," albeit with considerable danger, to a better future, the burden of proof regarding the feasibility of the transition and the details of the new world order rest with the visionary.

Fifth, given that nuclear weapons are here to stay, there has to be a nuclear strategy, and governments have to engage in what, traditionally, has been called "war planning." All that is worth debating is what the nuclear strategy should be. For both moral and strategic reasons, this author rejects strategies that threaten civilians directly. He agrees with the Pastoral Letter that the U.S. should not target civilians intentionally, and that the U.S. should not execute a *retaliatory* (or revenge) attack against cities under any circumstances. It so happens in this case that strategic reasoning leads to the same conclusions as does moral reasoning.

Sixth, U.S. policy-makers have no responsible choice other than to *plan* for the limited, discriminating employment of nuclear weapons. The alternatives are the following: should deterrence fail on the one hand there would be the certainty of a Holocaust; on the other hand there would be the strong, even very strong, *possibility* of a Holocaust. It would be criminally irresponsible to conduct nuclear defense planning in such a manner that if the deterrence system should fail, it could only fail in the most deadly manner possible. To say this is not to affirm a belief in limited nuclear war as a prospective fact, rather, it is to affirm the necessity for planning so as to maximize the possibility that any nuclear war would be limited. There really is no sensible debate possible on the subject of

strategic flexibility, since no one can seriously favor being strategically inflexible.[5]

Seventh, there is the contentious issue (or really non-issue) of planning to "win a nuclear war." Again, the U.S. (and Soviet) Government has no responsible choice other than to *plan* to win, or prevail, or conclude hostilities on favorable terms—the preferred form of words may vary. How would a government go about planning, purposively, to *lose a war*, or even to conclude a *stalemate*? All countries plan to use force with the intention of succeeding in their efforts. What would the American people make of a government in Washington which said that it planned to lose a war? It should never be forgotten that politically the Western Alliance, is, and always will be, on the political defensive. U.S. war aims in the event of an East-West armed conflict likely would be very modest. "Victory" is nuclear war may be translated into the West achieving its political goals, and those goals may be no more extravagant than persuading or coercing the Soviet Union to withdraw Warsaw Pact forces back behind their starting lines.

Eighth, nuclear deterrence is the first priority of the U.S. Everybody agrees on this. But, uncomfortable though it may be to have to face up to the fact, the prevention of nuclear war is not an overriding objective under all circumstances. If it were such an overriding objective, then the United States should disengage very promptly from her security commitments around the periphery of Eurasia.[6] It is U.S. (and NATO) policy, to be taken only in the gravest of

[5] See the discussion of this point in "'Dangerous to Your Health:' The Debate Over Nuclear Strategy and War," *Orbis*, Vol. 26 (Summer 1982), pp. 342-345. The prospective difficulties of limiting nuclear war are well argued in Desmond Ball, *Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?*, Adelphi Papers No. 169 (London: IISS, Autumn 1981); and, John D. Steinbruner, "Nuclear Decapitation," *Foreign Policy*, No. 45 (Winter 1981-1982), pp. 16-28.

[6] See Earl C. Ravenal, "The Case for a Withdrawal of Our Forces," *The New York Times Magazine*, March 6, 1983, pp. 58-61, 75.

circumstances and for plainly defensive reasons, that she will use nuclear weapons first if the only other choice is conventional defeat. This policy is dictated both by geography and by commonsense. The United States, in an abstract sense, does have a choice. But that choice is not between today's policy of first use in the last resort and the bluff recommended in the Second Draft of the Pastoral Letter. The United States is at liberty to renounce nuclear threats and nuclear weapons. To merit respect, people who favor that option must be prepared to accept the likely consequences, both geostrategic and moral.

Finally, most people agree that there is a role for an arms control process. But, history shows that we cannot achieve "peace," in any of the meanings of that overworked word, through arms control. If anything, excessive rhetoric and unrealistic expectations concerning arms control tend to do real damage to international security, because the disillusionment that must follow is similarly excessive. Arms control can be of modest assistance to strategic stability—no more than that.[7]

Policy Today

What is the nuclear deterrence theory of the Reagan Administration? This administration, in common with every administration over the past twenty years, recognizes that incredible threats will be discounted by a potential aggressor. Indeed, an incredible threat of instant Apocalypse, or Holocaust now, probably frightens us more than it frightens the Russians. Over the past decade, embracing four administrations, the U.S. Government has asked itself two central questions: what do the Soviets find

[7] Excellent reviews of the (limited) roles for arms control are Richard Burt, "A Glass Half Empty," *Foreign Policy*, No. 36 (Fall 1979), pp. 33-48; and "The Relevance of Arms Control in the 1980's," *Daedalus*, Vol. 110, No. 3 (Winter 1981), pp. 139-177.

most deterring? And, should deterrence fail, what might it actually be in the U.S. interest to do? The answer to the first question is believed to be to deny the Soviet Union any credible theory of victory on its own terms. In other words, the U.S. does not need a theory of American victory in nuclear war, but she does need a theory (and posture to match) for the defeat of the Soviet Union.[8] Naturally, the question follows—what would defeat the Soviet Union? The answer provided is that Soviet military power must be made to be defeated and Soviet leaders must fear that their ability to retain political control would be degraded or destroyed.

Needless to say, a U.S. strategy aimed at engaging Soviet military forces of all kinds would not only have pre-war deterrent benefit but would also be in the U.S. interest to implement in time of war. It should be obvious that both ides in a World War III would have the strongest imaginable motives to implement their targeting policies in a restrained manner. Because both superpowers would be very interested indeed in fighting a war removed from their home territories, there is some merit in the proposition that protracted conflict should be anticipated. The Soviet Union knows that political systems can come unraveled as a consequence of the pressures that long wars invariably place on society. It is important for *deterrence* that the West look to be capable of sustaining an armed conflict for weeks and months.

Clearly, some measure of cooperation between enemies over the "rules of engagement" would be needed. But in a context where neither side wants to initiate a homeland-to-

[8] For an analytical description by a former leading participant in the strategy-making process, see Walter Slocombe, "The Countervailing Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Spring 1981), pp. 18-27. Also of value is Desmond Ball, "U.S. Strategic Forces: How Would They Be Used?" *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Winter 1982/1983), pp. 31-60.

homeland nuclear war, the ability of the West to wage a protracted conventional conflict may be of critical significance both for deterrence and for insurance against the event.

A great deal of nonsense is spoken today about the nature of deterrence, and frequently generic deterrence is confused with a *particular theory* of deterrence.[9] The Draft Pastoral Letter encourages this confusion by quoting a selective definition of deterrence provided by some officials of the Arms Control Association who should know better.[10] A little theoretical rigor is required if meaningful debate is to be formed.[11]

First, there are several theories of deterrence, and the current debate over U.S. nuclear strategy is between those theories. No one is challenging deterrence *per se*. Second, to greatly oversimplify, there are two basic "camps" in the debate. One camp says stable deterrence is secured through the mutual ability to punish societies. The other camp says stable deterrence is secured when the United States can engage and thwart the strategy of Soviet military power directly (or indirectly through attacks on command and control). This second "camp" is characterized, misleadingly, as the "war-fighting" school of thought. To repeat, the "war-fighting" theory is a theory of deterrence. A so-called nuclear "war-fighter," no more wants to fight a nuclear war than a so-called mutual assured destroyer

[9] As, for example, in Robert C. Gray, "The Reagan Nuclear Strategy," *Arms Control Today*, Vo. 13, No. 2 (March 1983), pp. 1-3, 9-10.

[10] "Pastoral Letter," p. 31.

[11] For a detailed presentation of alternative approaches to nuclear deterrence, see Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy: The Range of Choice*, *Information Series* No. 103 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, December 1982). The best recent book-length treatment of nuclear deterrence questions is Keith B. Payne, *Nuclear Deterrence in US.-Soviet Relations* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1982).

actually wants to destroy anything. So much for semantic confusion.

By way of an added refinement, there are a few people, President Reagan included, who are very dissatisfied with the offense-dominant character of current defense preparations.[12] This author believes that the deterrent value of the threat to deny the Soviets a plausible plan for success is much attenuated by the fact that the North American continent lies naked to any kind of Soviet retaliation.[13]

The weapon choices in the Reagan Administration's strategic modernization program follow from its theory of deterrence, and the weapon requirements of that theory are very heavy principally because the United States chooses to accept extended deterrent duties on behalf of distant friends and allies. A U.S. deterrent posture capable solely of devastating a handful, or perhaps several handfuls, of Soviet cities (which probably would be evacuated), would be a deterrent posture *possibly* appropriate to a United States that asked of its strategic forces only that they deter a large-scale nuclear assault on North America. The so-miscalled "war-waging" theory of nuclear strategy and deterrence is driven by U.S. overseas, foreign policy commitments. One cannot debate the MX ICBM or the *Trident* II SLBM intelligently, save in the context of the strategy they are designed to enforce, and that strategy cannot be discussed intelligently save in the context of the foreign policy of the United States.

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[12] On March 23, 1983, President Reagan announced that he was directing the U.S. Government to seek ways by which the United States could be protected against Soviet strategic nuclear weapons.

[13] Colin S. Gray, "Nuclear Strategy: The Case for a Theory of Victory," *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Summer 1979), pp. 54-87.

The Pastoral Letter

While the differences between nuclear and conventional weapons, one-to-one, are very obvious, this author is ethically uneasy about drawing moral distinctions between threatening or killing people by one means as opposed to another means. For example, what is the *moral difference* between a World War II that killed approximately fifty-five million people over the course of six years, and a World War III that could kill anywhere between, say, five and one-hundred-and-five (or more) million people in an afternoon? Is the difference strictly quantitative? What if it could be demonstrated that in the most just of just causes a particular nuclear strategy could not possibly result in more than, say, one, two, five, or ten million deaths? Is the moral objection to the nature of the weapon? In which case, why? Is it to the *probable* scale of casualties? In which case where is the numerical threshold between just and unjust war? Or is it to the scale of *possible* casualties?

1. The Pastoral Letter begs the central issue when, near its beginning, it *asserts* that "it is neither tolerable nor necessary that we should be doomed to live under such conditions" (the threat of nuclear war).[14] The Letter offers no way out of these conditions, save for vague and unsubstantiated hopes for arms control, so the proper question may well be how do we render these conditions as tolerable as possible?
2. The Pastoral Letter asserts that "[t]he arms race is to be condemned as a danger, an act of aggression against the poor and a folly which does not provide the security it promises."[15] The *arms race* is not the danger, the danger lies in the foreign policy (mis)behavior of governments. Moreover, the

[14] "Pastoral Letter," p. 307.

[15] Ibid., p. 313.

United States is competing in arms in order to protect an international order of which she is the principal Western guardian. Given the strategic culture of the Soviet empire, it is folly not to race energetically.[16] As for the allegations that the arms race *promises* to provide security, it is difficult to imagine to whom the Bishops can have been listening. The West competes in arms because it has no prudent choice.

3. The Letter alleges that the possibilities for placing political and moral limits on nuclear are "infinitesimal."[17] This is a gross exaggeration. Both U.S. and, one must presume, Soviet nuclear strategy are permeated with political limitations. What would happen in the event of nuclear war is pure speculation. One may be skeptical of the prospects for reciprocal restraint, but to characterize of [sic] those prospects as "infinitesimal" is to transform a plausible argument into an implausible argument by going too far.
4. The Pastoral Letter contains the demagogic sentence: "To say 'no' to nuclear war is both a necessary and a complex task."[18] What does it mean, "to say 'no' to nuclear war"? What are the alternatives? Is the United States to say 'no' always? In which case, the strategy is a gigantic bluff which, in practice, would be culturally and politically impossible to support in a democracy?
5. The Pastoral Letter claims that nuclear capabilities deny the protective functions associated with

[16] See Richard Pipes, "Soviet Global Strategy," *Commentary*, Vol. 69 (April 1980), pp. 31-39; "Militarism and the Soviet State," *Daedalus*, Vol. 109, No. 4 (Fall 1980), pp. 1-12.

[17] "Pastoral Letter," p. 313.

[18] Ibid., p. 313.

national sovereignty.[19] However, the Soviet Union, with its damage-limitation programs, denies this assertion. Until President Reagan's announcement in favor of strategic defense on March 23, 1983, the United States had decided not to attempt to defend its homeland directly. Admittedly, such defense is vastly more difficult today than in the past, but the idea that homeland defense is impossible in the nuclear age is simply wrong.

6. The Pastoral Letter, in effect, would deny a workable nuclear deterrent while offering nothing plausible to take its place. "We believe it is necessary, for the sake of prevention, to build a barrier against the concept of nuclear war as a viable strategy of defense."[20] The Letter seems not to understand that a "viable strategy of defense" is a robust, if contentious, theory of deterrence against a distinctively Soviet adversary.
7. The Pastoral Letter argues that nuclear weapons must not be employed against population targets.[21] The Catholic Bishops would deny the U.S. the right to target military targets (that is a war-fighting strategy for defense) as well.[22] What then can be targeted, given that limited, contingent endorsement of nuclear deterrence is the reluctant position of the Letter?[23]
8. The Letter advises that the deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare can never be justified.[24] This will be welcome news to the Soviet Union and will suit their

[19] Ibid., p. 313.

[20] Ibid., p. 314.

[21] Ibid., p. 316.

[22] Ibid., pp. 314, 315, 317.

[23] Ibid., pp. 316-317.

[24] Ibid., p. 314.

military schemes very well. This author has some difficulty with the product of this ethical calculus that has been performed. The Bishops are advising that, if need be, Western civilization should surrender in the face of Soviet state power rather than use a single nuclear weapon (for fear of escalation to Holocaust). This idea lacks for a strong constituency in Europe.[25]

9. On the subject of "Limited Nuclear War," the Pastoral Letter asks "would not the casualties, even in a war defined as limited by strategists, still run in the millions?"[26] The answer is yes they would, and quite possibly run into the tens of millions. No one is trying to promise cheap, let alone painless, nuclear wars. If the United States cannot face the possibility of taking millions of casualties in a nuclear war, should deterrence fail, then she would be well advised to extricate herself as best she could from those political commitments that might even remotely serve to involve her in nuclear war. When one is in combat in the main theater of operations, large wars against large countries are always very expensive. The United States suffered relatively lightly in the two World Wars of this century, in large part, because the Wars were not waged on U.S. territory, because the United States entered the conflicts late, and because—in the 1941-45 case—the main body of the German Army was heavily occupied in the East.
10. The Pastoral Letter asserts that "in the nuclear age deterrence is often contrasted with defense. Since

[25] See Henry A. Kissinger, "Nuclear Weapons and the Peace Movement," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Summer 1982), pp. 31-39.

[26] "Pastoral Letter," p. 315.

the presumption exists that defense against a nuclear attack is not feasible, the burden of both U.S. and Soviet policy has shifted to deterrence."[27] White it is true that deterrence is often contrasted with defense, that contrast is logically false and should not be perpetuated without challenge. Defense is a theory of deterrence. In addition, it is far from a settled fact that defense against nuclear attack is infeasible.

11. The Letter asserts the importance of the superpowers moving by negotiation to nuclear weapon reductions and "eventually to the phasing out altogether of nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutual-assured destruction."[28] It may well be important, just as the eradication of cancer is important, but it does not follow that just because it is important it is possible. Moreover, as has already been observed, the phasing-out of nuclear deterrence would translate into Soviet hegemony over Eurasia.
12. The Letter says that "[i]n current conditions 'deterrence' based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may be judged morally acceptable."[29] Appropriate comments on this are to the effect that there would be no balance, since the nuclear deterrent acceptable to the Catholic Bishops would deny the U.S. the bargaining leverage needed for negotiating success with the Soviet Union; that it would not be a real deterrent, since the Bishops have denied the U.S. the right to target civilian or military targets; and that nuclear disarmament is infeasible

[27] Ibid., p. 315.

[28] Ibid., p. 316.

[29] Ibid., p. 316.

unless there has been a prior political revolution in the terms of East-West relations (and the Bishops do not claim to know how to effect such a revolution). In short, the whole approach recommended in the Letter rests upon a central fallacy: Nuclear deterrence is acceptable, *pro tempore*, contingent upon a progressive disarmament which all of the evidence indicates is not likely to occur.

13. The Pastoral Letter, again and again, misstates the character of nuclear deterrence. "If deterrence exists only to prevent the *use* of nuclear weapons by others [which it does not], then proposals to go beyond this objective to encourage war-fighting capabilities must be resisted. We must continually say 'no' to the idea of nuclear war."[30] The Bishops, somehow, hope to deter with unusable weapons. Perhaps they understand their argument, but others (this author included) do not. A "war-fighting" strategy, perhaps paradoxically is a strategy for the deterrence of war. The Bishops license a temporary nuclear deterrent, but deny the right to a nuclear strategy of any kind.
14. The Pastoral Letter repeats old fallacies about destabilizing weapons.[31] The MX IBCM, survivably deployed, is not a destabilizing weapon. However, the fulminations of the Letter against "war-fighting" strategies and "hard-target kill" weapons are much undermined by the fact that the Letter does not suggest an alternative strategy (remember that the U.S. must not target population).
15. In common with some freeze ideas, the Letter asks "support for immediate, bilateral verifiable agreements to halt the testing, production and

[30] Ibid., p. 317.

[31] Ibid., p. 317.

deployment of new strategic systems."[32] The Soviet Union will have to deny her basic political culture (always possible, but hardly very likely) before this can come about, since the U.S. cannot verify Soviet weapons production, save by very intrusive on-site inspection.

16. The Letter says that "efforts for negotiated control and reduction of arms must continue."[33] Public opinion certainly insists on this, but the Letter does not tell us why success is any more likely in the future than it was in the past. The whole structure of argument of the Bishops' Letter tumbles down if it is admitted that there are excellent grounds for having very severe reservations about the prospects for the negotiability of disarmament.
17. The Pastoral Letter asserts that "the numbers of existing weapons must be reduced in a manner that reduces the danger of war."[34] That sounds good as rhetoric, but it lacks substance. The fact is that there is no persuasive, powerful theory concerning the relationship of weapons numbers or quality to the danger of war.
18. The Letter advises that the United States should be prepared to take some "independent initiatives to reduce some of the gravest dangers and to encourage a constructive Soviet response."[35] It is difficult to oppose the idea of assuming limited, calculated risks in a good cause. But, it is contrary to the Soviet political culture to indulge in the business of gesture reciprocation. U.S. initiatives will be read by the Soviet Union as a sign of

[32] Ibid., p. 317.

[33] Ibid., p. 317.

[34] Ibid., p. 318.

[35] Ibid., p.318.

weakness. George F. Kennan advised the U.S. of that back in 1946 and 1947, and his advice is as true now as it was then.[36]

19. The Letter, correctly and sensibly, stresses the need for political engagement between East and West.[37] But, the problem of peace is not so much a problem of communication or even understanding as it is a problem of the content of Soviet policy.
20. The Letter makes some general approving points which really do not apply to the United States today. It advises that "[n]ations must accept a limited view of those interests justifying military force. True self-interest may include the protection of weaker states, but does not include seizing the possessions of others, or the domination of other states or peoples."[38] This describes a United States that is guilty of none of these heinous things.
21. The Letter advises that "it is necessary to develop means of defending peoples that do not depend upon the threat of annihilation or upon a war economy."[39] The Bishops are preaching to the already converted. U.S. nuclear strategy does not threaten (or intend to execute) annihilation; and the United States does not have a war economy. Was there ever a *war*-economy that devoted only 6-7% of its GNP to defense and did not draft people into military service?
22. The Pastoral Letter advises that "[h]istory has demonstrated that an upward spiral even in

[36] In his "Long Telegram" from the U.S. Moscow Embassy in 1946—which was the inspiration for his "Mr. X" article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947 on "The Sources of Soviet Conduct."

[37] "Pastoral Letter," p. 318.

[38] Ibid., p. 319.

[39] Ibid., p. 319.

conventional arms and a continuing unbridled increase in the armed forces, rather than securing true peace, are provocative of war."[40] History demonstrates no such thing. If the authors intend this remark to refer to the present time, could the U.S. defense build up be called "unbridled"? Undisciplined language like this damages the credibility of the whole document.

23. The Letter informs us that Soviet imperial policing behavior in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan "has led in some quarters to an obsessive perception that Soviet policy is directed by irrational leaders striving insanely for world conquest at any costs."[41] One may be sure that it has, but those quarters are not very important for the debate over nuclear deterrence. This author does not know any participant in the current debate who believes either that Soviet leaders are irrational, or that they are "striving insanely for world conquest at any costs."

It is all too easy to be misunderstood. There is much of value in the Pastoral Letter. However, as should be plain enough by now, this author believes that the central tenets that the Letter advances are devoid of merit. To summarize, the Letter:

- Suggests that the U.S. adopt a policy of nuclear bluff (she must never go first, and it would be irrational and immoral to go second).
- Ties temporary acceptance of a non-operational nuclear deterrent to the achievement of progress in arms control, when it provides no plausible idea how to succeed in arms control.

[40] Ibid., p. 320.

[41] Ibid., p. 321.

- Would have the general effect of weakening the Western end of the only security system that now exists.

What is Putin Up To?*

Scarcely a week has passed recently without new evidence of aggressive Russian opportunism, as best could be characterized by Vladimir Putin's misbehavior. With its highly reliable 'Information Series' of short papers, the National Institute for Public Policy (NIPP) has kept a close and careful eye on the state of the strategic balance. The detail of that 'balance' remains vitally important—we dare not risk living with any contrary competing assumption. This short paper strives to answer just one question about recent Russian military modernization: so what? It is often forgotten that the familiarity with which the concept of strategy tends to be deployed, is only rarely troubled by careful thought concerning its proper meaning. It is vitally important to remember that strategy is *all* about consequences. Behavior is guided by intentions as to hoped for results. Putin has been fortunate to be faced by an exceptionally untalented bevy of Western politicians in Obama, Merkel, May, and Hollande—men and a woman who may be politically adequate for quiet and unchallenging times, but not for a period more demanding than that.

So, what does Putin want to achieve? With vital thanks still due to an improperly, unfairly, overburdened United States in the realm of defense effort, Russia continues to lack serious geopolitical temptation abroad. The almost wholly strategic nuclear forces of the United States, assuming the current modernization plans hold, will continue to pose what promises long to remain a very adequate secure deterrent to the prospect of large scale war. This conclusion rests on the negative evidence of Russian misbehavior not

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* Original publication: Colin S. Gray, "What is Putin Up To?," *Information Series*, No. 412 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, September 18, 2016).

perpetrated and the contemporary narrative of deeds and misdeeds in the 'no significant warfare' column. Of course, political and strategic misjudgements can and occasionally do happen, as well as quite genuine accidents. It is entirely possible, and may even be politically desirable, for NATO to so maneuver itself politically, and even militarily, that it looks to be more effectively prepared for warfare with Russia than it does at present. It is particularly important for Russia to have this perception! NATO must not constantly appear to be on the defensive (e.g. asking itself 'what will Putin dare to do next?'). This image and political reality of Western strategic weakness simply invites further Russian disrespect. What is needed is for Putin to be worried about our possible response to his political and strategic misbehavior, let alone – dare one mention it? - about NATO initiatives.

From time to time in most deterrence systems, a largely ambiguous would-be/could-be deterrence will be needed to remind a deterree just why it is that he should feel deterred. This is particularly so for Putin because it is quite normal for a challenging party to push outward in order to see if the military and political deterrence barriers are still working effectively in place. A short, sharp shock must be administered to a Russia that misbehaves, lest Putin mistakes the limits of prudent behavior and strays into faulty and therefore dangerous ways. Western leaders should take heed of this brief advice. They otherwise risk Putin concluding that he can safely tempt fate.

Nuclear Security and Strategic Force Modernization*

There is nothing extraordinary about current Russian-American dislike, distrust, and antagonism. What is happening today is not a return to the much unbeloved Cold War of quite recent memory (only 26 years), but rather to the enduring reality of international politics as usual. This persisting condition has always been characterized by competition – political, economic, and inevitably military also. If we read history as we should, we learn that distrust or more active dislike among great powers, including actual warfare, is both normal and to a degree inevitable. The most persisting reason is not hard to fathom. When security/threat analysts of national security scan the current and anticipatable international horizon, quite properly they look out first and primarily for the larger, indeed existential, threats to the wellbeing of their home country. Americans today are almost spoiled for choice among somewhat villainous regional and even sub-regional local states, as well as a more serious malevolent one. The latter category only has one member, Vladimir Putin's recovering Russia.

The Problem of Russia

When considered in historical context it is unlikely that Putin would warrant nomination even for the 'B' list of 'bad guys'. Yes, he lies, cheats, bullies and threatens neighbors, and flexes his growing military muscles to change borders, which makes him seriously unsuited for partnership in a top state duopoly of cooperative powers alongside Uncle Sam. Lest we forget, the sundry crimes and misdemeanors

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* Original publication: Colin S. Gray, *Information Series*, No. 420 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 12, 2017).

his particular Russian regime has committed have been entirely standard practice by Moscow for decades. It is necessary to remember always that Russia lives, and has always lived, in a very rough geopolitical neighborhood, one bereft of geographical help for defense, save for sheer space with the distances it provides and its weather. From the time of Tamerlane's rampaging Mongols in the late 14th Century to Hitler's storming Teutons in the 20th, Russians have learnt that national history has been one characterized by loss of life on a very large scale. They know, really know, that history periodically produces horrific tragedies. Even if or when victory eventually is achieved, not infrequently it has been earned at an extremely high price.

Russia can never be an enduring friend and well trusted ally because international politics almost literally mandates antagonism, if not outright hostility in the relations between near-equals with competing interests. There is no inevitability of war between the two states, but the danger and risk of such an eventuality cannot be totally expunged. There is an apparent permanence in the mutuality of nuclear deterrence that holds in Russo-American relations. Nonetheless, given the danger that lurks in the situation it is desirable that some anxieties should be present in both countries. This is truly serious business and it is necessary that neither party should forget that fact. Given its history, it is perhaps no surprise that Russian leaders have not forgotten this point over the past two decades, unlike many in Washington.

The future is not foreordained and therefore reliably predictable, not, at least, so far as we know or can ascertain. Nonetheless, there are grounds for considerable optimism. While Russia will never be our friend, with prudent Western steps there is ample reason to believe that Russia will never be convinced she can take advantage of the United States over a matter about which the American public cares profoundly. Of course, even confident

expectations of expert analysts, occasionally are proven wrong by the actual unfolding of history—demonstrating once again the inherent uncertainty of political decision-making. The demise of the deeply unlovable USSR in late 1991, for example, generally was neither anticipated nor expected.

Alas, the end of that great socialist experiment did not herald the emergence of a new and benign dawn, one shedding light on old problems and illuminating a path forward for the human race. There was no tomorrow garlanded with evidence of good intentions for international peace and security. Not only did that fail to happen, its occurrence was not possible. The reasons were both all too human and also rather abstract. On the human front, when the United States emerged from a condition of Cold War warrior as the victor (and survivor) its leaders were more than somewhat surprised by the precipitate and non-violent collapse of its rival of the preceding 46 years. A few people were not surprised, Dr. Andrew Marshall and his Office of Net Assessment in the Pentagon, for honorable example. Understandably, it took some little time for Americans to absorb fully the definitive fact of Soviet disintegration and collapse; but what did it mean for the near term and beyond? Politics, internal, international, and a mix of the two, were as unpleasant as ever, if not worse, from the 'Horn' of Africa to Cambodia, and especially in the Balkans, where the death of Marshal Tito was taken as a 'start' signal seemingly for every ambitious politician in states or nascent 'statelets' in the region. The new, currently much disordered and seriously demographically and geographically diminished, Russia unsurprisingly meddled. However, it did not do so in a way or with a weight that much troubled the White House of Bill Clinton in the 1990s, nor did more significant and violent meddling appear to much trouble subsequent American administrations.

Russia's Revival

By the end of the Millennium and for a very few years thereafter it was not understood with much clarity in the United States that great states may be shaken, but that is unlikely to be the end of the story. As a consequence of a fall from greatness they can be stirred into revival in a form that works well enough for a while. In 1917 Russia was stirred by defeats and poor military performances both at home and abroad, but following four terrible years of civil war and foreign intervention the country was obliged to try something new, whether or not it so desired. The choice of the time was less than glittering—leading to the rise of Josef Stalin without any resemblance of free and fair elections.

What we need to appreciate is that Russia's history bequeathed a political culture that has expression in a strategic culture utterly unlike the American. To back up briefly: it is entirely usual for powerful states to be suspicious of each other. What has been, historically unusual, though not unprecedented, has been for there to be only two states in a topmost class of superpowers. Russia slipped in the competitive ratings seriously in the decade that followed immediately after the official dissolution of the USSR. Rather superficially this wounded condition was partially repaired in the 2000s, in the 'guided democracy' of neo-czarist Vladimir Putin. His Russia is a state back both with a vengeance, and very evidently seeking some vengeance upon those who disrespected the interest and wishes of a distinctly unholy recreation of Holy Russia.

It is important for us to recognize that our current troubles with Russia reflect not only the disagreements of here and now, but also are faithfully reflective of the entire historical narrative. When two powers rise far above the rest of the world they are almost condemned by what is common to their natures to be rivals. Blame for the antagonism always can be located if one looks hard enough,

but that exercise is futile, often misleading at least. The hostility is an inevitable and unavoidable consequence of the geometry of power. Each of two superpowers, even only great powers, have no prudent choice in their statecraft other than to regard the other through a lens colored by suspicion. It is only prudent for them to stress the taking of measures for the practical goal of prevention of possible subsequent regret. This is the demonstrated way of international relations and the rather unhappy context within which the United States and the West more broadly finds itself today.

Nuclear Weapons

We have lived with nuclear weapons for so long now (72 years) that it can prove quite a challenge to try to think through just how great their influence has been for both national and global security. Whether or not they are widely understood, two facts govern the reality of nuclear arsenals. The first pertains to the permanence of these weapons: they are here to stay. I need to cite this certainty since some people hold deeply moral and possibly religious objections to nuclear weapons. I do not doubt their sincerity or even the sense in some of their arguments. However, I am no less sincerely convinced that nuclear weapons have entered human weapons' arsenals on a permanent basis. Indeed, it may be unfortunate but still probable that it would prove extraordinarily dangerous to attempt to implement very large scale denuclearization, unilaterally, bilaterally, or on a global basis. It is all too easy to forget that although these weapons are indeed fearsome tools of state they did not appear, as it were magically from nowhere. Rather they were and remain the products of political competition between politically organized communities. The weapons exist because of the needs driven by human insecurities. History provides ample evidence of the bad results that

tend to flow as a consequence of undeserved optimism about the amity possible in international relations. Nuclear weapons and their various means of delivery are not and cannot be the problem. The problem, rather, is the enduring search for security manifested in the struggle to attain influence. Given that this character of our behavior often is judged in moral terms, we can appreciate that such fundamental debate over nuclear weapons is not likely to be helpful for policy and strategy. Nuclear weapons are what they are, and they are what they are because international relations are a reflection of us as we are, and by all appearances have always been.

The second often under-recognized fact about nuclear weapons is that they do not lend themselves at all easily to a strategic framework for employment in and by statecraft. The idea of nuclear strategy trips readily enough off a lecturer's tongue but familiarity should not be permitted to promote foolish disrespect. It may be helpful to recall the bare basic structure of strategy which is expressed in the standard formula comprising these elements: Ends, Ways, Means—and Assumptions. I will admit that the tail-end concept here is a personal insistence of mine. The United States has a nuclear strategy as it must, as does Russia. However, there is little doubt that an actual war would rapidly find nuclear expression that must strain toward and beyond breaking point the resilience of any state's society. It is relatively easy to conceive of a very small number of these weapons being employed to make a political point, but it is difficult to conceive how the hundreds and more weapons in both superpowers' arsenals could be employed for any politically meaningful, sensible purpose. Obviously, one would think, this has to mean that the superpowers could not risk causing catastrophe that easily would be far worse than any in humanity's bloody history—exceeding by far even the excesses in slaughter effected by Tamerlane's Mongols.

What is almost all too obvious is the strong likelihood that the slide from small (even just token) nuclear use on or for the battlefield in Europe, to a 'central' (homeland to homeland) war, could be unstoppable. Virtually any size of nuclear war would be catastrophic, and possibly nationally terminal for the relatively small states that comprise NATO in Europe. It is not self-evident that even the super-size superpower states—the United States, Russia, and China—could wage nuclear war for prudent political ends. In short, major nuclear war would not only be grossly imprudent, it would be literally beyond the bounds of strategy. Nonetheless, it is not a physical impossibility. All too plainly, nuclear employment needs to be deterred, and, in the case of some lesser nuclear-armed states, even physically disabled where feasible.

With considerable reluctance this essay is obliged to recognize the inevitability of an enduring nuclear policing role for the United States. This is not a matter for choice; it is driven by the realities of international politics. In practice, the only prudent question to pose is that of the nuclear capable armament required for American weapons today and tomorrow given that our choice is distinctly limited by the facts we know about our principal state competitor. The Russia we know well enough by now is a ruthless competitor for influence in the search for ever greater security. This is not an immoral goal, although it may be carried out in immoral ways. Rather it is usual for great states to press their influence outwards until it runs into a barrier that can only be overcome by the threat or use of countervailing force. All great powers, not excluding the United States, behave similarly. However, this time in the lengthy historical narrative, the great power that is striving to expand its domain both of actual ownership and influence at least, runs up against an opposing Alliance system in the character of a NATO that remains nuclear armed, despite some internal pressures to disarm. In order

to stand some reasonable chance of deterring or frustrating any Russian invasion, the Alliance will need to have some resort to nuclear weapons. If such resort would be a NATO initiative sought in military desperation, we might assume that the number of weapons used would be few. However, that cannot be a prudent assumption because the Russian military incentive to launch a preemptive nuclear attack might well be compelling.

Prudent Modernization of the Triad

The sad state of world affairs sketched briefly above leaves us with little prudent choice for national and international security. What we can do, however, is ensure is that such prospects as there might be for careful control and limitation of nuclear weapon employment, are fully prepared. A survivable and flexible nuclear force has long been recognized as key to this deterrence goal.

It is in that context that we need to address the urgent issue of modernization and, where necessary, replacement of elements in America's Triad of strategic forces (ICBMs, SLBMs, and Manned Bombers). Not all audiences appreciate just why this Triad needs attention. First and foremost is the fact that these strategic forces are akin to being the crown jewels of our country in strategic terms. They comprise complementary capabilities that could ruin any foe far beyond any possibility of recovery, and as part of a proper deterrence strategy, can effectively communicate this result to a spectrum of bad actors and thereby help deter their provocations. As much to the point, the performance of America's non-nuclear conventional forces to support our interests and allies abroad is given needed deterrence cover by the dreadful menace posed by our strategic forces. As Herman Khan explained more than

fifty years ago, a process of escalation connects the different kinds, levels, and amounts of force employed.[1]

The entire American Triad now begs for modernization to remain operational in coming years, and deserves the attention and support of the U.S. leadership. In particular, the Long Range Stand-Off (LRSO) cruise missile will be a weapon with a performance character that must be highly desirable, even essential, to meet the kind of challenges of most concern here. Replacing the old ALCMs (Air-Launch Cruise Missiles) of 1980s vintage, the LRSO will be "stealthy" and have the extensive range to ensure that our manned bomber force is not compelled of necessity to attempt to penetrate the advanced air defenses of the late 2020s and beyond.

Uniquely among strategic forces, manned bombers are relatively slow to complete their missions and are recallable on command, which may be of great utility during a crisis. Yet, our bombers could have difficulty penetrating opponents' active defenses in future years—hence the clear need for the "stand off" capability inherent in the LRSO. The weapons carried primarily could be conventional and precisely targetable for counterforce effect or they could be nuclear. Analysis shows that the LRSO option all but makes itself as being vital for the long-term health of the U.S. Triad of strategic forces. While the ICBM force is needed in order to hold heavily protected and probably defended targets at prompt risk, and the SLBM force to provide enduring deterrent effect, the airborne leg of the Triad can offer purposeful delay, even recall response in real-time to orders, and high flexibility as to use, timing, and signaling. The B-21/LRSO marriage offers an excellent investment prospect for a notably insecure world and wider flexibility for deterrence and assurance missions in the future; much

[1] Herman Khan, *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios* (New York: Praeger, 1965).

more so than the B-21 and nuclear gravity bombs alone could credibly accomplish.

An issue for LRSO critics is an overwrought concern that an adversary, presumably Russia, could mistake a *conventionally* armed U.S. cruise missile for a *nuclear*-armed LRSO during a crisis, and that this misunderstanding could escalate a crisis dramatically.[2] Many things are possible, of course, but recent history demonstrates that this concern is overstated. The United States has employed dual-capable cruise missiles in conflicts around Russia's periphery on multiple occasions in recent decades, for example: in Iraq in 1991, in Bosnia in 1995, in Kosovo in 1999, in Afghanistan in 2001, in Iraq in 2003, and against Syria in 2017, without any such problems. Indeed, Russia itself seems to have no qualms about launching dual-capable cruise missiles over and near stationed U.S. forces in the Middle East. In addition, if dual-capable cruise missiles are deemed so "destabilizing," then U.S. bombers and dual-capable aircraft must similarly be labelled since they too can carry both conventional and nuclear weapons. But any such designation can only be considered far-fetched, and indeed LRSO critics have not made this charge against our bombers or other dual-capable aircraft. Finally, the concern about LRSO and dual-use technology, beyond being unpersuasive, is vastly outweighed in a net assessment because LRSO will be uniquely valuable for the priority goals of deterrence, assurance, and damage limitation.

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[2] For example see, Dianne Feinstein and Ellen O. Tauscher, "A Nuclear Weapon That America Doesn't Need," *The New York Times*, June 17, 2016, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/18/opinion/a-nuclear-weapon-that-america-doesnt-need.html?_r=0.; Kingston Reif, "Cruise Control: Why The U.S. Should Not Buy A New Nuclear Air-Launched Cruise Missile," *War on the Rocks*, March 21, 2016, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/18/opinion/a-nuclear-weapon-that-america-doesnt-need.html?_r=0.

Conclusion

The international security environment breeds competition and suspicion among great states, and contemporary U.S.-Russia relations reflect this harsh reality. Russian national goals are inimical to U.S. and NATO goals and openly hostile to the *status quo*; and Russia has made the strategic choice of using its nuclear arsenal as a coercive tool to advance its hegemonic ends. This decision by Moscow has shocked Western audiences that almost universally had very different expectations about the future. The United States can and should act to extinguish the apparent Russian notion of profitable nuclear first use threats. Prudence now dictates the United States modernize its nuclear Triad to support its priority national goals of deterrence, assurance, and damage limitation. The LRSO is very likely to be a critical tool in these missions and deserves the full support of U.S. leadership.

Strategic Sense and Nuclear Weapons Today*

The Problem

The basic requirements for deterrence have been well understood for millennia, and for nuclear deterrence since the mid-1950s at least—well before the missile age dawned in the close of that decade. For the subsequent fifty years, it appeared to be the case that both the technical and the intellectual challenges of nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence had been met adequately. Would that such a satisfactory condition could hold indefinitely. Of course it could not and has not, which is the reason for this essay.

We in the West have fallen perilously behind Russia in the development and deployment of every category of what we understand and usually refer to as strategic forces. Furthermore, the general understanding of nuclear issues by the contemporary cohort of professionals and commentators has sagged deplorably. While there has been a trickle of excellent work on the subject of deterrence and missile defense, useful works on nuclear strategy are distinguished by their scarcity. In the early 1960s, there was a brief flurry of interest in variants of limited nuclear war, but this did not endure. Certainly the Pentagon was successful in leading a process of review and considerable change in refinement of actual nuclear targeting choice over the next decade.

However, what appears to have escaped particular close scrutiny is the Russian phenomenon that we see unmistakably today. Vladimir Putin is employing explicit and coercive nuclear first-use threats in pursuit of *current*

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Russian political objectives. These goals need to be seen both in historical and geopolitical context.

Context

As a matter of convenience and expediency, we are in the habit of applying simplifying labels to particular clusters of years in history. Both the years of Cold War and those since, however labelled, are unmistakable examples of thoroughly standard state political and strategic behaviour in international politics. *When two or more very great powers must co-exist, they are bound to be rivals as each is anxious about its security.* Of course, every rivalry in history differs from the rest in some, possibly significant detail, but the historical parallels are more than adequate as sources for our guidance. In short, we can and should be prepared to learn from the repeated parallels of history.

While we often, if not invariably, recognize the value in considering the relevance of the contexts to events from the past, there is another temporal zone that merits our attention. The future, of course, has no historical context to offer, but that does not mean we should ignore it. The vital key to aid in attempts to understand both past and future is the very high concept of the course of history comprising a great stream of time. This idea was central to the important book by Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, published in 1986, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers*.[1] It is very helpful for us to take advantage of what the great stream of times can teach, take an honest look at the causes of our insecurity, and re-tool where necessary for the future. In particular, it is necessary to understand the relations of security and insecurity in which the United States cannot help but be enmeshed.

[1] Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

The first class players in the global political and hence also strategic context for American national security comprises only two players beyond North America. Each of the three in the geopolitical and strategic triangle comprising ourselves, the Russians, and now also the Chinese, have no choice other than to regard the others with suspicion and even occasionally worse. The fundamental reason for anxiety and even possible belligerence lies simply in the undoubted facts of their comparative greatness. Virtually all states at root are concerned to ensure their security and domestic tranquility. At times, admittedly, this essentially domestic need will find expression in policy and strategic objectives that other states have little practicable choice other than to regard as menacing.

What this means is that it is necessary to recognize that it is entirely normal behavior for great powers to regard each other with suspicion, and often some hostility. The reason for this is not difficult to understand. When Americans scan the horizon for threats to their security, they are able to locate only two first class adversaries, Russia and China. Every danger other than that posed by the other great powers fades into low, or even less, significance. A prudent superpower does not waste energy on trivial threats nor pursue goals that experience proves impossible of achievement. Rome simply gave up on its ambition to tame the Barbarians from beyond the Rhine and the Danube. They learnt also that they could co-exist warily with Persia. Closer to home temporally and geographically, Britain learnt that it could lose the American colonies without having the sky fall as a consequence.

Good strategic sense, which includes prudence, advises on a desirable sound relationship between effort and reward. This invaluable quality, usually in short supply, sadly was not much in evidence in the early Twenty-First Century with reference to American (and British) policy and

consequent strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan. The difficulties in both countries essentially were of the same character. Stated in the most summary of forms, we did not really understand what we needed to achieve and therefore, in consequence, we did not understand how it might be secured.

It was in no small measure ironic that while American, British and some other Allied efforts were struggling to find or make political capital in Iraq and Afghanistan, far more serious developments were happening in Europe and also across the Pacific. Though thoroughly purged of the poisonous nonsense of communism, the residual Russia—to no surprise—was *not* a great state liberated from tyranny and free to adopt the democratic habits that were forbidden in the dark decades of its communist past. What we discover, instead, is a Russia entirely familiar from its history, that behaves as we should have expected of a great power commanded by a political leadership utterly disdainful of our understanding and practice of international order. This is not to condemn Vladimir Putin or the Russian state he controls. I am not striving to score moral points. My sole concern is to seek to ensure we have an accurate understanding of what Mr. Putin is about, and why he is about it. Accordingly, there is no great mystery about Russian policy objectives and consequent strategic performance today. Putin's Russia is behaving as we should expect a highly competitive great power to behave, and the reality of nuclear weapons is, on balance, regarded by Putin as a helpful backdrop for his statecraft.

Danger

Today there is no doubt whatsoever that the demise of the Soviet Union and therefore the belated end of its vile political system did not mean what many in the West hoped and even came to believe, that the residual Russia would

prove a benign, willing and somewhat capable partner for international security and stability, as defined in the West. Western policies came to be governed by the expectation that Russia would cooperate with the United States in the construction and, if necessary, the policing of a more cooperative New World Order.

Now we know, of course, that this powerful expectation of benign Russian behavior was pure fantasy. Many of us have some difficulty coming to terms realistically with the rather grim actuality of Russia today. But this is not to condemn Russia for disappointing extravagant Western hopes. Russia is a country led and run by people resolutely committed to the accumulation of personal wealth and power, who have no respect for supposedly enlightened Western theory or practice of law, domestic or international. It is a notable fact of contrasting national styles. Americans admire law, and the interpreters of law, but Russians do not. Americans are uniquely respectful of lawyers. Russians do not share this American trait for good historical reasons. This helps us to understand a contemporary example of a continuity connecting contemporary Russian leaders with their Soviet predecessors: they are in violation of virtually every arms control treaty they have signed.

The sharply contrasting American and Russian approach to international legal obligation is, unsurprisingly, exceedingly plain to see for anyone willing to look. It is almost amusing to witness both the facts of Soviet/Russian illegal misbehavior, and their subsequent insouciance about their persisting misbehaviour.

However, what is not so amusing is the new Russian style in coercive diplomacy. In a manner that is ominously reminiscent of Adolf Hitler, Putin and others have chosen to introduce explicitly ruthless threats, including nuclear threats, into Russian reasoning about acute international crises. They hypothesize about the high political value that would accrue as a result of nuclear use on a limited scale.

The hope, apparently, is that the NATO enemy, certainly the less robust members, at least, would be out-gunned either by the actuality, or more likely only by the credible threat of nuclear use.

In the language of now-classic strategic theory from a past generation of theorists, the Russians currently are talking with apparent seriousness about *nuclear escalation dominance*. Russian theorists claim, perhaps expect, they could win a war wherein Russia employs nuclear weapons only on a very modest scale. This expectation follows from a Russian belief that Moscow's employment of a few nuclear weapons would give them a decisive coercive edge in the diplomacy that should follow. Russian authors have advised us ironically that the use of these weapons would prove to be a decisive de-escalatory move—de-escalatory because NATO would be expected to capitulate. The high determination shown unmistakably by the fact of Russian nuclear use would surprise, even shock, audiences politically around the world. Thus, with unmatched boldness Russia should achieve a considerable political, perhaps even military victory.

Happily, there is and has been no evidence to support the prospect of a NATO defeat along the lines I have suggested above. The simple scenario suggested here has the virtue of stating what the Russians are saying today; whether or not they mean it is unknown, and perhaps unknowable in advance. The prudent Western defender, however, must entertain the possibility that Putin is a believer and take into account the nuclear instruments he is accumulating.

Questions and Answers

So, what can and should be done about the problem of contemporary Russia?

The nuclear dimension to the Putin problem precludes non-nuclear answers alone. Truly, for the first time since the Cold War, the United States and its NATO allies need to think hard once again about what they would have to do were they to be faced with an explicitly nuclear crisis, possibly in the immediate context of ongoing warfare in Europe. This is a thought process all but banished in the West, and none of our leaders are at all experienced in the attempted management of exceptionally severe international crises.

Of course, when or if events move perilously to the zone wherein almost anything might occur, it is probable that highly-refined points of deterrence theory would matter less than the credibility of political leadership and the structure of competing nuclear postures. Quite likely, an ICBM squadron here or there would count comparatively less than would the combination of reputation and known mental character of the key individuals on both sides. By this I do not mean to imply that the physical details of posture are unimportant, but that any decision regarding nuclear use surely would be unambiguously one of a political kind.

Perhaps rather self-defensively with respect to some possible reader reactions, I need to comment, at least, that there is no obvious sense in which a Russian introduction of nuclear employment must prove self-defeating for Moscow, as NATO's European members may lack the determination for nuclear release. This appears to be the Russian expectation, an expectation that must be corrected.

We have a very troubling challenge. The more responsible we are and sound in talking down possible roles for nuclear weapons, the more we encourage the Russians (and probably the Chinese) in the belief that we are weak or unready to defend ourselves. Given that the U.S. strategic force posture is notably aged, to be polite, and given that it cannot be modernized in a hurry, we are

obliged, for want of anything better, to look to the credibility and reputation of our politicians and high officials to buy us time while new metal is bent. Prudent Western leaders must now attach considerable urgency to the need both for manifest resolve and new metal.

The United States and World Order*

Introduction

I suspect that most Americans do not really understand just how powerful the United States is in the world. With very few exceptions the United States plays a dominant leadership role just about everywhere. This condition warrants the description hegemonic (from the Greek) so considerable is the country's lead internationally in most of the true foundations of power. With few exceptions, this American dominance has been a source of enormous net benefit to the world at large. In common with many other powers, even the United States has a few notable weaknesses, some of them, when regarded ironically, being largely a consequence of its relative greatness.

The reason behind my writing this essay is because it can be too heavy a challenge for Americans who are domestically domiciled to consider their country as it is regarded in and from the outside world. Of course there are events and episodes even, that typically bring Americans together, albeit generally only briefly. However, as often as not the American domestic scene may fairly be characterized as rather chaotic, at least apparently so. It is no easy task to endeavour to explain to foreigners what it is about the United States that truly is different from other countries. It can only be explained and possibly understood if one allows the complex interdependencies among three elements quite free play in explanation and understanding: geography, history, and culture. Each of these causal categories, when applied and interpreted in time, and also when regarded holistically, contributes vitally to

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comprehension of the American reality of today. Although one needs to avoid the hazards of unduly preclusive views of the future, it transpires that the trials and tribulations of world order in this still youthful country already are more than faintly discernible. In this essay I will attempt to explore both the dangers and the opportunities that are the notably distinctive lot of the United States.

Why the United States is Different

There is some sense in treating the United States analytically fairly simply as just a recent example of an unusually great power, condemned to perform balancing acts in both its ancient and modern forms. There is some merit in such an approach, wherein one seeks to neutralize, at least ignore the possible details of particular historical context. States, distinctive political entities at least, both rise and inevitably fall, rhythmically if not quite predictably, but fall they must. When a state is on top of its own preferred variant of world order, there can only be one direction for its competitive standoff, down!

All states weaken, collapse, and eventually disappear. There is no compelling reason why this given wisdom will not see the United States one day join once imperial Rome. As proved to be the case for Rome's Byzantine inspired successor state, there can prove to be considerable ruin in a once mighty empire. But the United States is not just a state like any other, only one that is relatively much larger than most of the rest. One can be sure that Presidents Putin and Xi are not confused by America's domestic critics into believing that the United States is really very much like all others, and worse.

Geopolitically, the United States is a maritime power, albeit one of continental size. In order to be influential in the world, Americans need first to secure and then to exercise a commanding measure of control over the approaches to

their North American homeland. The relative remoteness of American physical geography is both an asset and a liability, though on balance it is a physical context that yields great advantage when considered with reference to global security concerns. In Russian perspective, for example, the United States is a nightmare of an adversary. Russia, a country almost in love with physical geography, finds itself unavoidably in strategic competition with a foe that is unreachable by land power! Geostrategically, the United States is the one for which first Soviet, then Russian, power lacked traditional answers. By the devotion of extraordinary and carefully focused effort, Russia has managed generally to stay in touch, or even more, in some technical areas of weaponry. However, the contemporary weakness of their economy means that Russian competitive endeavours in the main are almost certainly in decline. Extraordinary effort and high talent has thus far enabled Russia's success in high-technology for competitive strategic advantage, but the scale and diversity of Russian military effort is not particularly impressive. Not, at least, when it is compared with the character and dimensions of a Russian geostrategic context dominated by a maritime-air American challenge and a rapidly growing Chinese danger of a familiar continental kind. It should be noted with regard to the latter, that in contrast to the United States, China poses a challenge for Russia that is entirely familiar when viewed in historically lengthy geostrategic terms.

What needs to be understood here is that the geopolitics of superpower competition are maturing as one writes. The transition from a bipolar to a tripolar strategic contest among the United States, Russia and China, is a shift of seismic significance. This game is always political, but it is scarcely less strategic. These three super-states have little in common, fortunately including character of national territory. Their strategic cultures are radically different, as unsurprisingly are their means, methods, and purposes of

domestic governance. Prospectively, there are grounds for worry that have a strategic edge to them concerning the problems of political comprehension that are near certain to follow from cultural asymmetry. Europe's Great Power system of management in the 19th century was serviced by a class of politicians and officials who understood a fairly common playbook of initiatives and responses: it is quite safe to observe that Putin's kleptocracy and Xi's party discipline constitute an unavoidable duo that it would be hard to invent for sharpness of contrasts with the United States.

Each member of the superpower trio has characteristically distinctive attributes and limitations that are highly salient to the great issue of world order. Possibly contrary to appearances, it is the United States that is the most reliably stable, indeed stabilizing, member of the superpower trio. Noisy, even all but embarrassing though the United States can be to its friends as well as to its own citizens, Americans should understand that there really is no adequate close substitute in devotion to order and the rule of law. The democratic process, notwithstanding and not ignoring its untidiness and even occasional villainies, confers a priceless competitive advantage to the United States over the sundry tyrannies that characterize the unappetizing political cultures of contemporary Russia and China. It is important to take careful note of the cultural, including political, differences, among the three superpower antagonists and to avoid the sin of 'black boxing' states as political and strategic actors.

The Perils of Tripolarity

Despite the commonality of authoritarian forms of governance, the narrow overlapping of Russian and Chinese interests is a connection of much fragility. While it is a challenge of no small importance to the United States, it

also is no exaggeration to suggest that statecraft in Moscow and Beijing, no less than in Washington, is both troubled as well as tempted by the challenging possibilities that may open up.

Sino-Russian compatibility, regarded at the most elevated of levels, the grand strategic, is indeed impressive, not to say remarkable. Each is in possession of the asset most lacking and therefore most needed by the other. Whereas China is awash with people far beyond the level of strict need for relative greatness, Russia – even in its post-Soviet trimmed down character – is master of far more physical geography than it requires. Courtesy of much theft and plain emulation, in useful addition to domestic talent and efforts, China has succeeded in rising very rapidly in the newly three-cornered game of thrones.

There is some irony in a possible benign consequence of tripolarity, specifically a contest with three players should encourage caution, perhaps moderation, in policy and strategy because a state player will be fearful of so weakening itself even in successful competition with just one superpower foe that it would be weakened vis a vis the unengaged state. In the tripolar competition among the United States, Russia, and China, any political duel would have to be conducted in a context of relative power that was ever mindful of the likely implications regarding the third, currently unengaged, party. This is not by any means novel in the whole menu of international problems and complications, but it is a context that is wholly unfamiliar to the generations of statesmen and strategists who have worked since 1945.

We should never forget that all politics past, present, and prospectively future, is about relative influence. Whatever the form of domestic governance, the whole game of international politics always is definable as the quest for influence. Politicians scheme for it and soldiers sometimes fight to achieve it. Putin is heir to the dismal house that

Stalin built, and Xi is critically dependent on a party and state structure constructed in horrific ways by Chairman Mao's murderous regime. But, whatever the differences in domestic politics, culture and material circumstance that distinguish Americans from Russian and Chinese leaders, they all strive to succeed in the common currency of relative international power. It can be helpful to our understanding of events for us to appreciate that, cultural differences granted, each super-state is led by people who understand, in distinctive ways, the value of that currency, and that each one of the three super-states is governed by relatively bold, determined leaders ready to take risks if they deem it necessary.

There can be no serious doubt about the uncertainties that will likely trouble a tripolar balance of power. Such a system of relations is thoroughly unfamiliar to us, indeed to all three superpower participants. As noted above, for example, there can be no presumption of mutual understanding. Exciting demarches in politics and strategy are not presented to international audiences with an explanatory, excusatory note. Not infrequently, we may misinterpret a foreign move that is devised primarily for the purpose of answering domestic critics, both active and anticipated.

In addition, a fundamental difficulty lies in the incompatibility of expectations among the three super-states. Each of the three – America, Russia, and now China – is more than marginally captive to its own historical narrative. The United States emerged from the wars in Europe and also in Asia in 1945 as the sole truly global power. It is perhaps remarkable that today, more than seventy years on from the strategic triumph of the mid 1940s, world politics remains organized along lines thoroughly familiar from those all but signalled so many years in the past. In large part we should recognize that the long disparaged and even dismissed lessons from

geopolitics for statecraft and strategy have much lasting reality.

For example, the great Cold War ended in 1991, to the surprise of most interested parties and their dependents, but we find that today, almost three decades later, Russian behaviour is notably reminiscent of its late Nineteenth Century ancestry. Brezhnev's Soviet Union has been replaced by Putin's Russia, but what, really, has altered, if anything? A problem today is not so much the reality of Russian power, but rather is it the very plain fact of Moscow's belief in its entitlement to hegemony over Eastern Europe. This Russian belief is best characterized as being cultural, not only political and strategic, though certainly it is the latter two. We should not forget that Putin's Russia is notably captive to attitudes, ambitions, and fears that were the product of the country's dreadful historical experience, both that attributable largely to geopolitical accident and also to domestic compulsions of the oppressive kind. It would be difficult to overstate the relative importance of both physical and of mental (that is to say, imagined) geography to the prospects for World Order.

The third 'pole' in this tripolar contest, China, remains unreformed from its Communist Party blight, though it seems to be willing, if not quite reliably able, to leap to the future with a hypercapitalistic spirit. Superpower tripolarity will be troubled by the continuities of China's attempted imperial outreach, with all its dangers.

World Order

The future of any plausibly achievable condition of World Order is not looking overly bright. Appearances, however, should not be permitted to overwhelm us. It is necessary to face up to the gravest of threats to global order. Taking a severe risk of undue reductionism, I believe that there are just two global threats to our human order: climate change

and nuclear weapons. These are truly collective menaces. The first of these menaces, climate change, may well prove to be more intractable than the second, and is not the subject of this essay. Suffice it for now to say that the appreciation of contemporary geopolitics behind the argument in this paper would very likely, indeed probably, be shifted notably by global climate change.

It is in no small measure ironic that this brief discussion of World Order is obliged to regard nuclear weapons as a *relatively* manageable problem set. Unlike climate change, real or fearfully anticipated, we have cohabited with nuclear weapons for just seventy-three years. These weapons have attracted the full range of views: moral, political, strategic, and technological. Happily ignorant though we remain concerning the details of nuclear warfare, we are certainly sufficiently knowledgeable to understand that its unlimited conduct must be a human catastrophe of imprudently grim dimensions. With particular regard to our theme here of World Order, it is necessary, if admittedly possibly controversial, to observe that we have responded to the reality of nuclear weapons in a rather balanced way. On the one hand we (nearly all 'we', that is), recognize that the human security narrative offers no practicable alternative to acceptance of what our science and technology unavoidably has donated, initially with the pressing incentive of an ongoing world war. Nuclear weapons are here to stay unless and until rendered obsolete by some new military technological development. Our entire human history has recorded, at least shown, that although individuals may make moral choices with consequences that are personally fatal, entire communities do not usually behave collectively in such an anti-strategic, which is to say non-self regarding, way. At least, they do not do so if they enjoy some useful measure of foreknowledge of adverse strategic consequences.

There is no excuse for ignorance regarding the dangers posed by large nuclear arsenals. But unquestionably they are here to stay. This is not discretionary. There is no non-nuclear option in support of World Order. An important part of the nuclear story needs to be recognition of an inevitable irony. Specifically, as we long have acknowledged the essential concept of mutual nuclear deterrence, nuclear weapons can be tamed: controlled in the cause of World Order. But, we must accept that these fearsome weapons have to be disciplined for deterrence use.

Conclusion

The relations between states are never love affairs, but they can, indeed must, be conducted with mutual respect. Each member of the superpower trio is what it is, the product of its history and geography. Conflict and some hostility in the relations among the three is only to be expected. A tolerable condition of World Order, however, can and does cope with the competitive politics of greatness. For reasons of geography, culture, and politics the United States uniquely plays critically important roles balancing would be hegemonic powers in Europe (Russia) and Asia-Pacific (China). This is a global, political, strategic, and—yes, moral duty that has fallen to the United States on behalf of all humanity. Provided the United States can remember that it needs to remain committed to order in both Europe and Asia, all should continue to be well enough.

Prepared Statement of Colin S. Gray, SDI Policy Issues, Department of Defense, Appropriations Committee, 1986

I would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to speak on the policy issues of the SDI.

Two years after President Reagan's historic announcement on March 23, 1983 of what was to become the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), it is important to take stock of the policy debate that has evolved. In order to provide a sharp focus for the discussion, my statement is organized as answers to thirteen charges that currently are being levelled at the SDI.

Issue 1: The Character and Purpose of the SDI

Charge: The SDI has been explained in different ways by different officials—there is a lack of coherence in the policy rationale.

Answer: The SDI, as an initiative to explore what defensive technologies may be able to do, necessarily cannot be tied to the rationale of a single military mission at this time. It is not evidence of policy incoherence to say both that there is a long-term possibility that strategic defenses may render long-range bombardment by missile and aircraft as obsolete as the cavalry charge, and that in the shorter term defenses of a technically more modest character could serve exceedingly useful limited purposes.

It is perfectly consistent to say (a) that one day strategic defense may transform the terms of deterrence essentially so as to exclude nuclear threats, and (b) that during a possibly lengthy transition period from today to such a

condition of defense,* strategic defenses could, indeed should, greatly strengthen the stability of nuclear deterrence as we know it now.

Issue (2): Stability in Time of Crisis

Charge: The existence of strategic defenses will create new incentives to strike first in **a** crisis.

Answer: This is the "mad systems analysts'" view of the world. As a matter of narrow defense 'analysis, it should be true that a first strike would fare better than, a second strike against defenses. The argument proceeds to claim that the Soviet Union will choose to begin a central war rather than risk being caught by a U.S. first strike and having to retaliate with damaged and uncoordinated forces against intact U.S. defenses.

This charge neglects to explains (a) why the Soviet Union would anticipate any gain from "going first" in a crisis—even if they should.do "better" going first rather than second (i.e., why would they expect to do well enough?); (b) why U.S. defenses sufficiently serious as, allegedly, to motivate a Soviet first strike, would not also be sufficiently serious as to compromise Soviet expectations of military "success."

It is worth noting that the people who level this charge tend also to be the people who claim that the SDI will be a great technical fiasco. They would have us believe that the SDI, at one and the same time, will be technically incompetent and a major threat to stability!

SDI weaponization, far from imperiling crisis stability, will help strengthen existing disincentives to strike first. Even at an early stage of deployment, SDI weapon

* Defense dominance may be defined **as a** condition wherein the contemporary relation of relative advantage between offense and defense is reversed.

architecture cannot help but raise critical new uncertainties in Soviet minds over their ability to strike reliably and in a timely fashion against U.S. strategic C3I assets and strategic retaliatory forces. As the military incentive to strike diminishes—with the prospects for military success—so must the political incentive.

It is important that the Soviet Union not be the first to deploy nation-wide BMD, in addition to their air and civil defense programs. Soviet official attitudes towards "acceptable damage" may be dangerously different from American attitudes. The tough new Soviet leadership could come to believe that a new BMD addition to their posture would give them a new potential for intimidation.

Bearing in mind the likely circumstances of an acute international crisis, with both **sides'** strategic forces being in a status of generated alert, a weaponized SDI would provide a very useful hedge against accidental or unauthorized strategic action by any party.

Issue (3) Stability and the Arms Race

Charge: The SDI will fuel a more complex defense-offense "spiral" of arms race activity, creating new tensions and not providing any enhancement in security.

Answer: There is no technological escape from the arms race. The arms race is on today, substantially—though far from exclusively—in the offense-offense realm. Anything the U.S. elects to do which challenges the military integrity of Soviet war plans is a candidate for a Soviet response. There is nothing uniquely stimulating of an arms race response about the SDI. The Soviet Union will attempt to target U.S. SSBN's, mobile ICBM's, superhard silos (if we go that route), and to detect, track, and kill "stealthy" air-breathing strike forces. (Too many American critics of the

SDI choose to ignore the cultural asymmetries between the U.S.S.R. and the USA.[1]

What **is so** different about threatening the military efficacy of Soviet missiles with active defense, as contrasted with agile mobile deployment, prompt launch on confirmation of attack, or protection by concrete and steel? The problem is the Soviet will to compete, it is not with the mode (active defense, in this case) of the U.S. challenge to Soviet strategy.

To claim, sensibly, that the Soviet Union will attempt to "race" with the SDI, offensively and defensively, is really a trivially obvious point—it is not a criticism (though many critics seem not to understand that), The superpowers are in a dynamic arms competition today. Prominent among the U.S. policy motives behind the SDI is a determination to shift some of the terms of the competition away from the accumulation of ever-more lethal offensive forces.

The SDI is likely to dampen the race in offensive strategic arms, if, and only if, defensive technologies render offensive forces increasingly unreliable military instruments. The SDI offers the only possible path to a transformation in the technical and strategic terms of the arms competition away from weapons lethal to people Whether or not the U.S. will succeed remains to be seen, this is what the SDI is all about.

Issue (4) Arms Control and the ABM Treaty

Charge: The SDI poses a potentially fatal complication for the arms control process today, while in the medium term it places at risk the integrity of the ABM Treaty.

[1] See Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (University Press of America, 1984).

Answer: There is no denying that the SDI is providing an important set of complications for the design of arms control policy today. However, those "complications" could better be stated as opportunities. SDI critics tend to forget that the SALT/START/INF process either "failed" or was in acute "crisis" long before President Reagan made his speech on March 23, 1983.

The "problem" of the SDI for arms control today does not reside with the U.S. SDI, rather does it lurk in the (expected) Soviet attempt to discourage the West from pursuing this new approach to stability. Far from being incompatible with arms control, the SDI is the only instrument capable of triggering a disarmament regime of substantial benefit to stability.

"Deep reductions" in nuclear arms are of little relevance to peace and security if: (a) the forces permitted can be lethal against military targets, and (b) those forces are still very large in absolute terms. The SDI could: (a) defend retaliatory forces and essential; (b) discourage further accumulation/improvement of offensive forces, and (c) "police" a truly deep-reduction regime (by neutralizing the military/political value of treaty non-compliance—even on a large scale).

If the Soviet Union should come to fear a combination of effective U.S. offensive and defensive forces, it should discern a most pressing set of reasons to negotiate sharp cut backs in offensive arsenals.

Issue (5): Alternatives to the SDI

Charge: The SDI is unnecessary.

Answer: No one is suggesting that, somehow, the nuclear age can be repealed. But if one believes it may be possible to effect reductions on such a scale in the size—or effectiveness in action—of nuclear arsenals "that Western

society no longer need be at terminal risk, then it is difficult to discern plausible alternatives to strategic defense.

To sustain the charge that the SDI is unnecessary one would need to argue that "there is a better way." It should not be forgotten that the SDI looks both to strengthen deterrence and, if needs be, to provide physical protection. Since there are no paths available, at present, towards the transformation of the basic character of world politics, this charge has to rest upon the proposition that an offense-dominated deterrence will fail or be irrelevant.

The case for the SDI, in the context of this charge, is (a) that it should lead to a more effective deterrent of war, and (b) that it would be the only reliable way in which damage in war could be limited very severely. The SDI carries the promise of strengthening the pre-launch survivability of offensive forces during the early stages of a "defensive transition," all the while providing more and more persuasive reasons for the Soviet Union to restructure its strategic forces away from offensive elements (because they will not "work") over the long run.

There are problems with strategic stability in an offense-dominated world and strategic defense looks to be a cost-effective solution to many of those problems. While, in the longer term, although SDI cannot alter the character of Soviet-American security relations, it certainly may be able to alter the burden of risk to society, indeed to the entire planet, that is inseparable from "the balance of terror."

Issue (6): The Technical Feasibility of the SDI

Charge: Whether or not strategic defense is desirable is beside the point, the SDI simply will not work.

Answer: The technical feasibility of the SDI remains to be demonstrated. No one is making extravagant claims—save on the negative side. Military history is replete with

examples of whole classes of weapons being rendered obsolete (or having their roles changed dramatically) by new technologies. There is no reason in principle why the long-range ballistic missile might not cease to be a useful weapon of war against a superpower.

The technical infeasibility charge needs to be interrogated closely as to its details. What is it that a weaponized SDI, allegedly, will be unable to do? (1) Protect retaliatory forces? (2) Provide vital minutes (at least) of survival time for C3I assets? (3) Discourage the targeting of urban areas of no, or very minor, military importance? (4) Keep all nuclear weapons away from American society?

Some SDI critics are arguing that the offense always can restore a relation of advantage over the defense. This is poor military historical analysis. It is true that there has been a permanent dialectic between offense and defense—meaning that one could as well argue that the defense always restores a relation of advantage but that dialectic reveals itself in different ways. There is nothing in history suggesting that an SDI ascendancy over offensive missiles need not be permanent, though history (and commonsense) does suggest that two states locked in a long-term competition will probably find new, or revive old, ways to hurt each other.

If one seeks ways to end the arms competition, one must look to political factors, not to technology.

Issue (7): The Cost of the SDI

Charge: The SDI is not affordable.

Answer: It is difficult to conduct cost-effectiveness analysis when the cost (of SOI weaponizationl is not knowable at this time.

SDI critics hover in their cost preferences in the range "several hundred" billion-$1 trillion for SDI, R, D, T, E and

procurement. These numbers are worthless except that they have a contemporary political impact that is not easy to counter. The proper starting point for analysis, if we grant the critics' premise of a multi-tiered (four or five) architecture of defense, is to say that for "X dollars" we should be guying the functional equivalent of (and perhaps the event itself) of near-total nuclear disarmament of the Soviet Union. For "X dollars" Americans would have bought effective immunity of American (at least) society from terminal (though certainly not all) nuclear danger. No other category of weapon, of any kind, can protect American society in this way. A weaponized SDI, multi-tiered, offers a unique quality and quantity of physical protection. What should Americans be willing to pay for that?

If, for the sake of argument (and only for the sake of argument), we take a figure of $500 billion as a full-up R, D, T E, and procurement cost of a multi-tiered weaponized SDI, elementary arithmetic shows that the cost would be 8% of the defense budget for the next twenty years.[2] If a defensive transition is spread over thirty years, the burden is reduced, of course. No critic of the SDI is going to win a political argument claiming that 8% of the defense budget for twenty years is not "worth" the physical protection of North America.

Issue (8): The SDI and the "Fortress America"

Charge: A protected America would retreat upon itself and the current structure of international security would collapse.

[2] Assuming a constant level of $300 billion per annum for the defense budget.

Answer: The logic in this charge is as bizarre as the claim is popular (abroad). It may be true that if U.S. strategic defenses trigger new soviet strategic defenses, the Western Alliance will need to reconsider its strategy (as the terms of deterrence alter), but the connection between SDI weaponization and American isolationism is so elusive as to be analytically invisible.

A modest scale and character of SDI deployment in the 1990s would strengthen the contemporary terms of offense-dominated deterrence—and thereby would help bolster the last line of NATO-European defense. More capable strategic defenses, designed to keep the vast majority of Soviet nuclear weapons away from American "targets" (of any kind), logically must help strengthen the long-standing U.S. role as principal security guardian of distant friends and allies. After all, it has been the vulnerability of North America to Soviet attack that has caused European leaders and theorists, since the 1950s, to question American reliability as security guarantor (would the U.S. risk New York for Hamburg?, etc.).

If America returns to isolationism, it will be because it discerns an unwillingness on the part of allies to help in their own defense to an appropriate degree, not because the U.S. is newly defended by a weaponized SDI.

Issue (9): The Soviet Response to the SDI

Charge: The Soviet Union is willing and able to offset U.S. strategic defense with new quantities and qualities of offensive forces.

Answer: There is no question but that the Soviet Union **is** strongly motivated to discourage the United States from pursuing open ended, all-purpose, strategic defense R and D, wheresoever it might proceed. Similarly, there can be no doubt that the Soviet Union is able to produce more

offensive forcea and upgrade the quality of new offensive weapons.

However, Soviet defense planners can be trusted to be sensible in their allocation of scarce economic assets. A highly cost-effective SDI deployment, the only kind the United States would field, will not be met by an endless proliferation of Soviet offensive assets. Facing an exponential rise in the price of access to American "targets," Soviet defense planners will nave to recommend a fundamental-change in policy (this has happened before— until 1968-69, the Soviet Union favored heavy constraints on offensive forcea and permitting defenses to run free).

Furthermore, a point frequently neglected, the Soviet Union's difficulties with the effectiveness of its offensive forces do not reside solely in the realm of (potential) problems with the SDI. Whether or not the U.S. SDI matures into a period of weaponization, Soviet planners have to be anxious that the days of confidence in offensive counterforce success may be passing swiftly, U.S. C3I modernization means a much reduced prospect for a decapitation strike, prompt launch out, under or after attack, of MX and Minuteman may not be usefully targetable; and Ohio class SSBNs pose an intractable ASW problem, All of these concerns, and more, should point to the conclusion already signalled tentatively by Marshal Ogarkov that defensive counterforce is more reliable a means of limiting damage than is offensive counterforce (which is not to suggest that the Soviet Union would choose one or the other exclusively).

When the Soviet Union comes to believe that the United States truly will stay the course with the SDI, its tactics should change towards arms race management. It is more likely than not that the Soviet Union will seek to negotiate a new strategic defensive arms treaty which permits deployment in technical areas where in Soviet competitive potential is good (terminal and late mid-course), and

precludes deployment of a kind not reliably attainable by Soviet science-based industry (boost, post-boost, and perhaps mid-course defenses).

Issue (10): The SDI and a "Technological Peace"

Charge: Peace can only be political. The SDI is a futile attempt to provide an inappropriate technological solution to a political problem.

Answer: Peace is indeed political rather than technological. But, the military expression of an essentially political incentive to compete, or even fight, is, no less essentially technological. The basic security problem for the United States is the assumed political incentive Soviet leaders might have some day to use their weapons. Given that no one, critic or proponent of the SDI, has any plausible theory today of how we proceed to effect a general and definitive political settlement with the Soviet Union, we have no choice other than to minimize those dangers to our security that can be minimized.

Soviet long-range missiles pose a technological threat to American survival. It is entirely appropriate that, ponding the political evolution in a benign direction of U.S.-Soviet security relations, a technological answer be sought to that technological danger.

The SDI should enable us to deter war more reliably and even, if need be, survive a breakdown in the deterrence system. No responsible person is claiming that the SDI, itself, effectively resolves political problems. But, the SDI may enable us to live more safely with the political problems that continue to evade effective political treatment.

Issue 1(1): Offense and Defense in a Period of Transition

Charge: A period of "defensive transition" would be uniquely dangerous for stable deterrence.

Answer: The proper relationship between the offensive deterrent that the United States has today, and the defensive deterrent that it may have tomorrow, is indeed a challenge to sensible policy-making.

The key to maintaining stable deterrence is to ensure that at no point do Soviet military planners have a plausible theory of military victory. It is close to a certainty that both superpowers will want to maintain a substantial offensive arsenal, if and when they proceed to deploy new BMD weapons, (a) to "backstop" defensive deterrence, (b) to deter third parties, (c) "just in case..." However, as the U.S. Government says today, a point may, indeed should, come when deterrent duties vis à vis in the U.S.S.R. can be shifted from offensive to new defensive force elements.

It is important that there be no premature transfer of duties, from a deterrent that "is," to a deterrent that "may be." Furthermore, the U.S. SDI would be assisted very considerably were the Soviets to agree to a negotiated deep reductions regime in offensive nuclear arms. For the Soviet Union to be persuaded sooner rather than later to join in a cooperative, or at least partially cooperative, defensive transition, it is important not only that they give great technical credit to U.S. defenses, but also that they should be anxious concerning the ability of u.s. offensive forces to penetrate their defenses.

As the President has stated, it is not the U.S. intention to achieve a first-strike advantage, But, if a very useful disarmament regime is to be negotiable, it is probably essential that the Soviet Union anticipate an evolving future strategic balance increasingly to their military

disadvantage. It will always be a unilateral possibility for the United States to downgrade the quantity, and even restrict the quality, of its offensive forces—to moderate Soviet anxieties—but Soviet anxieties, unfortunately, really are the engine of arms control progress.

Issue (12): The SDI and Western Alliance Cohesion

Charge: The SDI will promote a quality of political disunity within NATO that will more than offset whatever military security benefits it might confer.

Answer: The security condition of European allies is different from that of the United States, for the simple reason of geographical proximity to a wide range of Soviet threats. That is a fact of political life, and has long been recognized in the architecture of NATO's strategy of "flexible response" (MC-14/3 of 1967).

NATO-Europe recognizes that lli key to its security is Soviet belief in the "coupling" of the USA with the security of western Europe. In practice this means today, as it always has, that the United States has to be permitted to manage the military details of the central strategic relationship in ways that it finds tolerable.

The SDI opens the possibility of change in the terms of deterrence—and the NATO-Europeans are suspicious of change. After all, they claim, the current situation is "good enough," is it not? NATO-Europe can see the legitimacy, indeed political necessity, for the United States to defend itself if it can—as an absolute U.S. obligation to itself. U.S. allies, understandably, are concerned (a) rest of U.S. SDI prompt new Soviet defenses that degrade the deterrent value of western offensive nuclear threats (in which even, "what deters?"); (b) lest a U.S. SDI is so expensive that the U.S. cuts back dramatically its general purpose force deployments in Europe, and (c) lest a defended America

prompt a U.S. President to take more risks in foreign policy than Western Europe (vulnerable to Soviet tank armies) deems prudent.

If the U.S. does not pursue the SDI as critical to a credible first-use strategy, then defenses are likely to weaken the deterrent value of the upper echelon of the "NATO triad." Deterrence, in a heavily defended world (East and West) will be enforced by: (a) effective conventional forces, (b) protected defense mobilization potential, (c) residual nuclear anxieties. It is worth emphasizing that a weaponized SDI could protect the NATO allies from nuclear or conventional missile/aircraft attack, and that such SDI protection could be critically significant in reducing soviet military confidence vis à vis a conventional invasion.

Politically, and with reference to military strategy, NATO should come to appreciate the SDI as more of an opportunity for benign change than as a threat to a security system that works well enough.

Issue (13): Ethics and the SDI

Charge: There is no ethical case for the SDI.

Answer: Moral philosophy distinguishes between two kinds of argument: the absolute (or deonotological) and the consequentialist. The case for the SDI max be made with both kinds of argument.

In terms of the ethics of consequences, the SDI should provide a more robust deterrent against war, and—should deterrence fail nonetheless—should ensure that the least dainage possible (in admittedly a very bad situation indeed) is suffered, In absolute terms, the SDI defends what and who can be defended. It can be argued that the U.S. Government has an absolute duty to provide protection to the American people.

In addition, one can argue that to deter by threatening to defeat enemy weapons is absolutely morally superior to deterrence by the threat to damage enemy society (to be blunt: "killing people is wrong, and threatening to kill people is wrong"—particularly if there is a better way available).

American society finds all aspects of nuclear weaponry morally repugnant. Moreover, there can be no offensive nuclear strategy "with a human face." U.S. deterrence strategy today, with its quite heavy reliance upon (latent) nuclear threat, is an affront to tho values of our culture. It is probably not too strong to say that Western uneasiness with, and distaste for, the means of nuclear deterrence, dangerously undermines the goals of our policy.

In a speech on March 15, 1985, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, posed and answered the following questions:

> But can we afford even now simply to wait for the scientists and military experts to deliver their results [on the SDI] at some later stage? Have we a breathing space of five, ten, fifteen years before we need to address strategic concerns? I do not believe so. The history of weapons development and the strategic balance shows only too clearly that research into new weapons and study of their strategic implications must go hand in hand.

The study of the strategic policy implications of the SDI is proceeding with no less energy than is being expended upon the technical questions.

Written Statement of Dr. Colin S. Gray Before the Research and Development Subcommittee and Investigations Subcommittee, Committee on Armed Services House of Representatives, Ninety-Eighth Congress, First Session, November 10, 1983

Strategic Defense and National Security

I. Introduction

The People Protection Act of 1983, advanced in strong support of President Reagan's dramatic initiative endorsing homeland defense (March 23, 1983), in a wholly praiseworthy measure that challenges the U.S. political system to be prepared to consider radical change in the ways in which it thinks about strategic policy.

It is important that discu1aion of the meaning and possible implications of the People Protection Act be conducted on all sides with a sensitivity, indeed an empathy, towards skeptical and dissenting views. There are some important, legitimate grounds for questioning the long-term policy direction signaled by President Reagan on March 23, 1983. In this testimony I will specify and discuss those grounds for skepticism as fairly and objectively as I am able.

Very often, proponents of new military technologies are accused of envisaging technological panaceas for political problems—of seeking a technological peace rather than a political peace, Although I am a firm proponent of strategic defenses, I have argued for many years that "The Arms Race

is About Politics."[1] The technological arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union is an expression of a deep-seated political rivalry. That political rivalry stems from the character and dynamics of Russian/Soviet imperialism, and may be dissected and analysed in terms of traditional statecraft (*realpolitik*), ideology, or some malign combination of them both.

Given the longevity of Russian/Soviet predatory international behavior—in the search for the chimera of total security—it would be a very bold person indeed who would venture to predict a benign transformation in the political terms of East-West relations in the near future. Indeed given that thirty-eight years of the nuclear age to date have failed to register any dramatic change in the ways in which world politics are conducted, it is only prudent to presume that the next thirty-eight years, similarly may see the conduct of international politics on the basis of "business as usual." My point here, simply, is both to admit that strategic defense cannot address the roots of Soviet-American political competition, and to remind people that strategic defense is not being recommended by strategic analysts such as myself in lieu of a quest for a truly political peace.

For several years now, Americans have been instructed by publicists, scientists, theologians and other moralists, to the effect that nuclear war would be terrible and might even be fatal for life on Earth. People have always known this. The balance of prudence long has been tilted heavily in favor of assuming that a World War III would not be a survivable event for our civilization. *The Fate of the Earth*[2] could well be at issue as a consequence of a nuclear war, for the reasons cited by Carl Sagan and his colleagues in their

[1] For example see my article "The Arns Race Is About Politics," *Foreign Policy*, No. 9 (Winter 1972-73), pp. 117-29.

[2] Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

recently presented thesis concerning the possibility of a "Nuclear Winter."

The problem with the writings of Jonathan Schell, Carl Sagan, the Catholic Bishops, and the rest is that one looks in vain to their arguments in search of some policy-relevant advice. It is all very well for us to be reminded of that which we already knew—i.e., that nuclear war would be a catastrophe from which our civilization might not be able to recover—but what flows from that possible fact as policy recommendations? Bumper-sticker politics or slogans—"Say No To Nuclear War," and the like—are no doubt sincerely intended, but they are not very helpful to American policy-makers who must cope today and prospectively for a future of indefinite, or at least uncertain, duration, with a very heavily nuclear-armed Soviet Union that shows no signs whatsoever of being amenable to a constructive quest for a general political **set**tlement. Moreover, given the mandatory ideological basis to the claim to legitimacy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, it is not at all obvious that any Soviet leadership group could entertain the possibility of a general political settlement with the west.

It is my contention that so long as the United States has a security relationship with the Soviet Union—whatever the terms of that relationship—*and* so long as the world continues to be organized into separate national and multi-national security communities, there will be a very strong case for the United States developing and deploying homeland defenses. Moreover, I will argue that homeland defense is needed both in the context of very large and sophisticated Soviet offensive forces—that is to say in the 1980s and 1990s for certain—and in the hypothetical context of a nuclear-disarmed world.

Today, the addition of twenty or thirty ballistic or cruise missile warheads to the Soviet strategic arsenal is of no significance. But, if President Reagan's vision of a nuclear-

disarmed world were to come to pass, solemnized and effected by a disarmament treaty, a Soviet Union that successfully hid twenty or thirty (or perhaps even many less) nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, would have to hand the means for political intimidation for global hegemony. To be very blunt about it, the United States could sign a treaty for truly drastic reductions in the size of nuclear arsenals, let alone for zero-scale nuclear arsenals, *only* if it had in place a convincing array of active strategic defenses.

I am very easily convinced by the argument that our Soviet-oriented security dilemmas can be *resolved* only by a transformation in the terms and character of East-West political relations. But, the Apocalypse Brigade who predict a "Nuclear Winter" and a terrible *Fate of the Earth* have yet to convince me that they have anything to say that can much help our policy-makers. Granted that nuclear war could mean the end of history, what should we do?

II. Hopes for Peace, Risks of War

In the long-run, East-West political rivalry and the military competition that it fuels no doubt will fade into history as have other long-standing enmities. The Soviet-American competition may lose its point as new political and security circumstances transform political alignments. It is possible that nuclear weapons *de facto* have removed the option of the deliberate initiation of major war as an instrument of policy by Great Powers seeking military solutions to political problems, but I doubt it. Certainly it would be grossly imprudent for us to assume that there was even a "nuclear taboo."

It should not be forgotten that the great rivalries of history have, as a general rule, been resolved militarily: think of Athens and Sparta; Rome and Carthage; Rome and the barbarian tribes on her Rhenish and Danubian frontiers,

England and France in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and again in the Eighteenth and very early Nineteenth Centuries, the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe: and more recently the longstanding enmity between France and Germany, One can find historical precedents for almost any character of evolution of Soviet-American security relations—ranging from a resolution of differences in the face of the growth of a new third-party threat (e.g., France and England—and Imperial Germany), through the "Carthaginian Peace" imposed or inflicted by Rome at the conclusion of the Third Punic War (149-146 B.C.), to the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.) which saw Sparta the nominal victor but which so weakened the Greek city states that the principal beneficiaries of the war really were the Persians and the Macedonians.

The only intelligent attitude to adopt towards the future of Soviet-American relations is one of agnosticism. It is claimed here that the homeland defenses encouraged by the People Protection Act of 1983 would play important, indeed possibly crucial, benign roles for security no matter how Soviet-American relations should evolve, and that the development and deployment of homeland defenses would not have a net harmful effect upon the quality of political relations. To be specific, it 11 claimed here that strategic defenses

- **would** operate greatly to enhance attack-planner uncertainties, and hence would strengthen deterrence to reduce the risk of war (this, traditionally, is the first goal of arms control)
- **could** function so as to reduce significantly the damage that the United States otherwise would suffer in war (this is the second goal of arms control)
- **would** be required "to police" any deep-reductions regime for strategic nuclear offensive forces. The Soviet incentive not to comply fully

> with a deep-reduction, and particularly with a reductions-to-zero, disarmament regime, would be enormous. In the canon of Soviet behavior, it would be irresponsible for *not* to cheat, if they thought they could profit so by. Multi-tiered American homeland defenses would raise the threshold for the quantity (and quality) of cheating necessary for strategic advantage, to a level where such activity should be deterred.

Save for the improbable, ahistorical case of a world no longer organized into separate security communities obeying the dictate of a self-regarding, self-help approach to national security, there is a comprehensive case to be advanced for strategic defenses, Those commentators who like to design new world order need the assistance of more practical people who have ideas on the subject of how we can survive the journey from the heavily nuclear-armed world of today to arrival at the preferred new world order. Realistically, given that nuclear weapons cannot be disinvented, and that nobody, bar none, has a persuasive story to tell concerning how we effect a benign transformation in the politics of global security, our policy-makers must assume that the United States faces an enduring problem in managing the risks of a nuclear-armed world in ways compatible with providing adequate support to U.S. survival interests and vital interests.

Retaliatory deterrence, resting upon the threat to destroy or damage high-value assets of the Soviet imperium, seems to have worked well enough. After all, there has been no bilateral nuclear war, and the United States has yet to acquiesce in Soviet hegemony over territory declared by the U.S. to be of a vital-interest character. Why change a successful strategy?

The central problem with a security system resting upon offensive deterrence capabilities is that it pits rationality, skill in statecraft, and luck, against historical experience and

commonsense. It is true that the disincentives perceived by a superpower to military action involving, or likely to involve, another superpower are unprecedentedly large today. Nonetheless, it is a bold leap of faith to jump from accurate recognition of nuclear fears to the conclusion that the recorded history of pre-nuclear Great Power conflict has no cautionary tales for our age. History and a commonsense appreciation of human frailties tell us that people in government can make mistakes. They may behave rationally, on the basis of the (always) imperfect information available to them, and yet precipitate a catastrophic sequence of events.

The probability of a unique event like a nuclear war cannot be computed, but it is very reasonable to assert that the likelihood of deterrence failing today or tomorrow is low or very low. Our difficulty lies in the fact that very long-odds events can occur—particularly if the game is played over a very extended period of time. The contemporary system of reciprocated offensive nuclear threats appears to be quite robust today, but how robust would it prove to be in a circumstance of truly acute crisis? Leaving aside for the moment the admittedly crucial question of whether strategic defenses could work well enough politically (for deterrence) and technically (for denial of access) to be worth purchasing, anyone who affirms that the current deterrence system is "good enough" is *guessing* (not calculating—calculation is impossible) that that system will *never* break down. What is meant by *never*?

Prospectively forever—which may mean thirty, fifty, one hundred, or more years—the United States, for reason of the geopolitical structure of international security organization, will need to deter a heavily nuclear-armed Soviet super-power. Past balance of power systems always have had war, and the threat of defeat in war implicit in the possible or actual assembly of a superior coalition, as a regulator of international order. Even if war on the grand

(nuclear) scale between the superpowers is ruled out as a deliberate regulatory instrument, "trial-by-crisis" and client-state conflict is far from prohibited. 1914-18, it should be recalled, was triggered by client-state conflict.

My argument is that although one cannot possibly *demonstrate* the strict necessity of homeland defenses for maintaining deterrence or, *ergo*, for the limitation of damage, provided the technical promise of such defenses is attractive the burden of proof or plausible argument should rest upon those who would have the United States deny itself direct homeland protection, At the present time the offense-dominant nuclear-deterrence system is one that would "fail deadly" if it failed at all.

[…]

(a) Prospective Benefits[3]

(1) *Uncertainty for Deterrence*. Any strategic defense program, be it a simple "swarm-jet" defense of missile silos or a system of space-based laser battle stations, must increase attacker uncertainty by reducing the calculability of the effectiveness of attacks that even in the absence of active defenses are fraught with imponderables. A security system with nuclear deterrence at its heart could not be other than strengthened were a prospective aggressor to be confronted with the necessity of dueling, for the first time and on a massive scale, with one or more active defense systems. In the real world of fearful human beings, as opposed to the imaginary world of dehumanized strategic logic, one should never despise the "defender's advantage." The burden of decision is on the attacker. We may harbor doubts as to the probable operational effectiveness of our

[3] This section draws upon my contribution to David Schwartz and Ashton Carter, eds., *Ballistic Missile Defense in the 1980s and 1990s* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1983), Chapter 12.

active strategic defenses, but how does the problem appear to the possible enemy?

(2) *Offensive-Force Reduction and the Saving of Lives*. States will not allocate scarce resources to the sustenance and development of forces that they believe will be ineffective. Strategic defense, in the future as in the past, will never be totally beyond possible successful challenge, but the price that defense can extract for its defeat could offer profound discouragement to the planners of offensive, strategic nuclear operations. Therefore, should strategic defense technology for BMD ripen with great promise, both superpowers would have large incentives to reconsider the strategic value of at least a major (and a very major, in the Soviet regard) fraction of their offensive striking power. Almost needless to say a large-scale shift in the balance (today the gross imbalance) between the offense and the defense could, and should, have important consequences for the scale of the potential human tragedy that would attend a war.

(3) *Reduce Self-Deterrence-For the Strengthening of Deterrence.* Logically at least, a United States equipped with damage-limiting "layers" of active and passive defenses (back-stopping counterforce prowess of all kinds), should be, or should appear to be, more willing to take the controlled and limited strategic nuclear initiative on behalf of beleaguered overseas allies. In practice, one may be certain that very serious residual doubts over the operational effectiveness of strategic defenses would serve to discourage a President from any activity that approached nuclear adventurism. Nonetheless, the deployment of strategic defenses for North America should help to recouple in (Soviet) perception the security of NATO-Europe with prospective employment of

U.S. "central systems," and as a consequence, logically, should enhance the stability of deterrence.

(4) *Insurance Against, and Deterrence of, Soviet Non-Compliance with a START Regime*. The greater the scale of force-level reductions, the more adverse could be the consequences of Soviet non-compliance. Strategic defenses could deter non-compliance both by holding out the promise of rendering strategically ineffective missiles deliberately concealed, and by requiring—for the confident defeat of the defense—so massive a scale of secret manufacture, stockpiling, and deployment, that the risks of detection would increase to an unacceptable level. A defended America should be more willing than an undefended America to tolerate a START regime that did not have a truly robust verification story.

(5) *"Policing" a Nuclear-Disarmed World*. In the absence of active defenses against ballistic missiles and air-breathing nuclear delivery vehicles it is utterly inconceivable either that an American President would sign a *comprehensive* nuclear disarmament treaty or that the U.S. Senate would vote positively to ratify such a treaty. The history of Soviet strategic behavior when under legal restraint shows very clearly indeed that the Soviet Union sees no inherent sanctity in treaties. The Soviet SALT record demonstrates both that they will do what they believe they can get away with and that they have learnt that there tends to be no penalties, no sanctions, consequent upon their being discovered in non-compliance. Russian/Soviet political culture is the product of a thousand years of brutal national experience and it is highly unlikely that that culture will evolve benignly in time for such evolution to be of any relevance to U.S. policy-makers over the next several decades. If total nuclear disarmament must wait until the Soviet Union evolves into a pluralistic democracy

characterized by popular sovereignty, seeing a moral obligation attached to strict adherence to treaties, and rejecting the idea that secrecy is a virtue, then nuclear disarmament will never happen. Indeed, if the political culture of the Soviet Union were to change to the degree just specified, it could well be that there would not be any very urgent necessity for nuclear disarmament.

Unfortunately, even if one could postulate not inplausibly a rapid benign evolution in Soviet political culture, complete nuclear disarmament would have to be the rule for all nations if it was to cover any. Needless to say, adequate verification of global comprehensive nuclear disarmament would be impossible—"adequate" would have to be fool proof, because five or ten nuclear weapons in the basement of a presidential palace would matter very much. More to the point perhaps, even if Soviet or American inspection teams were to discover that some country had retained, or secretly manufactured or assembled, a small nuclear-weapon arsenal, that country would have very persuasive (nuclear) means of ensuring that the superpowers could not do anything about it.

The only way in which global comprehensive nuclear disarmament could be on the ragged edge of strategic and political feasibility would be in the context of thickly deployed active defenses for the superpower homelands. Non-nuclear BMD and air defenses would constitute the safeguards that legislators rightly would require as a condition for ratification.

(6) *Avoidance of Technological Surprise*. Unless the United States pursues research and development into strategic defense technologies, it will not know what the Soviet Union will discover from such activity. R&D in strategic defense precludes technological surprise that might render U.S. ballistic missile forces ineffective.

(7) Deterrence of Soviet Defense Deployment. A healthy R&D program on strategic defense must serve to shorten the lead-time to deployment, should the technology prove to be sufficiently attractive (in the context of predicted responsive countermeasures). Soviet decisions concerning withdrawal from, or abrupt abrogation of, the ABM Treaty of 1972, will not be unaffected by their calculation of the character and likely speed of American competitive responses.

(8) *Hedge Against the Failure or Irrelevance of Deterrence.* The "causes of war" are structural, and have to do with the nature of man, the character of states, and the nature of the goals (and the means employed in pursuit of those goals) that states pursue—in partial competition—within a system of inter-state relations.[4] But the occasions, or proximate causes or triggering events, for war are potentially so various that they cannot be "modelled" very usefully. States are at least as capable of stumbling into war through faulty assessment, bad luck and the like, as they are of making a conscious decision to fight. No one knows how robust the contemporary system of nuclear deterrence really is. It is arguable, at least, that the system truly has never been tested: that neither superpower has ever felt a very strong incentive to fight the other. That situation may not endure indefinitely. Strategic defenses hold out the possibility—all considerations of deterrence aside—of enforcing a limitation of the damage that each side *could* do the other. It may be worth recalling that the limitation of damage is the second of the classic objectives of arms control (the first, of course, being the reduction in the risk of war occurring).

[…]

[4] See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).

Strategic defense constitutes largely unknown territory in both policy and technical terms. The People Protection Act of 1983 serves a vitally useful function in providing both proposals supportive of the President's initiative of March 23, 1983, and a focus for constructive discussion. The potential benefits of strategic defense are so significant for the question of peace or war that I hope, though with only modest expectations, that we can proceed with open minds to see if the journey truly will be worth the effort required. On matters of government organization, The People Protection Act effectively challenges the executive branch to commit itself in management reality to the policy that it says is authoritative.

About the Author

Born in 1943 in Oxfordshire, U.K., Dr. Gray studied at the Universities of Manchester and Oxford in the United Kingdom and has taught at the Universities of Lancaster (U.K.), York (Canada), and British Columbia (Canada). He was a Ford Foundation Fellow at King's College, University of London, and an Assistant Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, in London. From 1976-1981 Dr. Gray was a staff member, then Director of National Security Studies at Hudson Institute, Croton-on-Hudson, New York.

Dr. Gray became a naturalized U.S. citizen and, in 1981, co-founded the National Institute and served as its founding President. He continued in that capacity until he and his family relocated from the Washington, D.C. area to the United Kingdom. Following Colin's return to the United Kingdom, he continued to serve as National Institute's European Director while also leading international security study centers first at the University of Hull and subsequently at the University of Reading. Dr. Gray was a brilliant scholar, prolific writer and superb teacher. His unparalleled body of work on a wide range of international security topics has had a significant and enduring impact on U.S. strategic thought. It is required reading in many university courses and continues to be referenced in professional writings across a wide range of strategic topics.

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