THE OBJECTIVES OF ARMS CONTROL

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Introduction. The argument for arms control is persuasive: arms races are both expensive and inherently dangerous; therefore, any control or elimination of arms is good. Unfortunately, appealing as this formulation may be, it can be a hazardous one, because it is an oversimplification. Although arms control can be highly beneficial, all arms control is *not* necessarily good, and it can be dangerous to assume that it is.

Too often those of us whose professional concern is military security do not pay adequate attention to the relationship between security and arms control. Yet arms control and military security are integral parts of the same subject—the safety and well-being of the nation. Because of the current arms control dialog with the Soviet Union, it is useful, and perhaps necessary, to examine the objectives of arms control more carefully. In view of the frequent lack of clarity encountered in discussions of arms control and disarmament, a review and restatement of fundamental considerations should be useful.

Arms control and disarmament, although similar, are not identical. Disarmament necessarily involves an arms reduction; arms control involves an arms limitation of either quantity or type and may or may not constitute a reduction. It is entirely possible, although unlikely, that an arms control arrangement might involve an actual increase in arms. Arms control, as the more inclusive term, will be used in the remainder of this discussion.

The Objectives of Arms Control. William C. Foster has stated the basic objective of arms control succinctly: "In the final analysis, the decision whether to negotiate a given arms-control agreement boils down to weighing the risks of undertaking it against the risks of not undertaking it."[1] In other words, arms control is intended to do something for us, to, in some way,

leave us in a position preferable to that before arms control.

Thus any arms control treaty is not an end in itself, but only a possible means to several ends. As such, it must be evaluated in terms of how well it is designed to accomplish its purpose. It is simply inadequate to assume that all possible arms control arrangements are useful or even that, because an arrangement serves one useful purpose, it is worthwhile. An arrangement which is highly desirable from one point of view may be extremely dangerous from another. It is necessary, therefore, to subject any proposed agreement to painstaking scrutiny to determine whether or not it will help us reach our desired objectives.

What are the objectives of arms control? Three areas of benefit have been claimed. One has to do with security: that arms control makes us safer than we would otherwise be. The second benefit is economic: that arms control would save money. The third benefit is political: that arms control assists in the achievement of nonmilitary national objectives. Each participant in a system of arms control seeks these same benefits, though they may be gained in differing proportion and to different degree. These objectives are comprehensive in the sense that all important effects of any practical arms control or disarmament arrangement will fall into one of the three categories.

For purposes of analysis, however, the first category, dealing with security, needs to be subdivided. The effect of arms control on security is complicated and can be contradictory. If the analysis can be clarified by dividing the question of security into several parts, it will help. From a security point of view, the three questions that must be asked of a prospective arms control arrangement are: (1) How does it affect the probability of war?; (2) What effect does it have upon the intensity or duration of war if it does break out?; and (3) What is the effect on our position relative to potential opponents? The reason for distinguishing these three aspects of security is that, although they are interrelated, arms control does not necessarily accomplish them equally and may accomplish one at the expense of the others.

After subdividing the objective of security and adding the economic and political objectives, there are then five fundamental questions to be asked of any potential arms control arrangement. These are: (1) How does it affect the probability of war? (2) What is its effect on the intensity or duration of war? (3) What is its effect on our position relative to potential opponents? (4) Does it save money? and (5) Does it help in achieving nonmilitary national objectives? It is highly improbable that any practical system of arms control will provide favorable answers to all five questions. Thus it is necessary to weigh gains in some areas against disadvantages in others.

The remainder of this discussion is devoted to a consideration of each of these five areas, their interaction, and the degree to which they are achievable through arms control.

Arms Control and the Probability of War. Probably the most fundamental argument in favor of disarmament or arms control, and certainly the one most frequently asserted, is that arms races and high levels of armament are primary causes of war, and that their limitation or elimination will make war less likely. For example, in a highly respected book, *World Peace Through World Law*, Grenville Clark and Louis B. Sohn state that "experience teaches that long-continued arms races have usually ended in violent conflict, since the fears and tensions engendered by the competition create an atmosphere in which war may break out almost by accident and without a fixed design for war on either side."[2] Despite the prevalence of

this view, however, it is by no means uncontested. In a perceptive recent book, Evan Luard, for example, after careful examination of the historical relationship between the level of armament and the outbreak of war, concludes:

> There is in fact no clear evidence, nor obvious reason to suppose, that the danger of war has ever borne, or bears today, any close relationship to the volume of weapons possessed. There is certain historical evidence to support the opposite view (the fact that wars often break out when nations are poorly armed, as in the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, the Balkan Wars, and others, or stay at peace when highly armed, as between 1948 and 1968). If the will to war itself is unchanged, arms will usually be found to wage it.[3]

The fact is that the relationship between levels of armament and the stability of peace is a complicated one and very far from the simple notion that arms cause wars. In some circumstances, even the failure to enter into an arms race can be dangerous to peace. Hedley Bull has stated that the military factor most important in bringing about the Second World War was "the failure of Britain, France and the Soviet Union to engage in the arms race with sufficient vigor, their insufficient response to the rearmament of Germany."[4]

It would therefore appear that under the right circumstances some kinds of armament contribute to stability, while other kinds are destabilizing. As an example, given the present state of mutual nuclear deterrence between the United States and the Soviet Union, the situation is more stable if both sides have relatively invulnerable nuclear strike forces, tending to make both sides less trigger happy. If both sides possessed only vulnerable strike systems, susceptible to being incapacitated by a first strike by the opposing side, the situation would obviously be much less stable. Therefore, an arms control arrangement which eliminated invulnerable strike systems while leaving vulnerable systems intact would be destabilizing.

In the present state of our understanding, it is not possible to state unequivocally any general relationships between armament and the stability of peace, although some tentative hypotheses might be suggested. For example, under present circumstances, anything which reduces the credibility of deterrence would appear to be destabilizing. Dynamic changes in relative military strength, whether numerical or technological, also appear to be dangerous: a powerful nation losing ground to a more dynamic potential opponent has a strong incentive to initiate hostilities before its relative position becomes worse. On the other hand, developments which assist in providing prompt and reliable information about the capabilities and intentions of potential opponents (such as the "hot line" and surveillance satellites) probably contribute to stability by helping to prevent war by accident or miscalculation.

Further complicating the relationship between armament and the outbreak of war is the fact that there are many kinds of war, and measures which make one kind of war less probable may increase the chances of another kind. A foolproof scheme of nuclear disarmament, for example, might increase the probability of conventional conflict by removing the caution engendered by the fear of nuclear escalation.

To summarize, there is a relationship between armament and the probability of war, but it is neither direct nor simple. Pending better knowledge of the relationship than we now have, about the best that can be achieved is a case-by-case examination of the implica-

tions of specific weapons systems and weapons control proposals in an attempt to determine their probable effect. In such an evaluation, it is important to keep all of the objectives clearly in view. Use of formal criteria, similar to those discussed here, can be useful in the study of probable effects.

Arms Control and the Intensity of War. Closely related to the attempt to reduce the probability of war is a desire to limit the intensity of conflict if war does break out. In effect, this is an attempt to prevent certain kinds of wars—the more violent kinds—rather than a general effort to prevent all war.

The effort to reduce the intensity of war today gains much of its urgency from the existence of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. It is widely recognized that a total nuclear war would be destructive beyond anything that has been imagined heretofore, and this makes the problem of preventing large-scale nuclear war a first order of priority.

There are three main points to be considered here: (1) not all arms control or disarmament arrangements serve to limit intensity if war *does* break out; (2) in making some kinds of war less likely we may be increasing the probability of other kinds; and (3) a lower initial level of armament does not necessarily ensure a less violent war.

Certain kinds of arms control measures, designed to reduce the probability of nuclear war, may accomplish that purpose but at the same time actually increase the destructiveness of war if it does break out. For example, a ban on defensive systems, such as the ABM, might enhance the credibility of deterrence and thus reduce the probability of nuclear war. But if nuclear war *did* break out under these circumstances, both sides would be likely to suffer considerably greater destruction than if they had effective defensive systems.

So long as deterrence remains a primary means of security, the deployment by either side of a really effective ABM system would have a serious destabilizing effect. First, by assuring the power which deploys it that the enemy's offensive weapons could no longer deliver unacceptable damage, it lessens inhibitions against embarking on courses of action which might lead to nuclear war. Second, it forces the other side in self-defense to escalate the arms race in an attempt to restore the previous balance.

Even more dangerous, and more likely, is an ABM defense which would be effective only if a first strike drastically reduced the enemy's offensive capability. Then, in a crisis situation, this would force serious consideration of launching a preemptive strike to accomplish this drastic reduction. Similarly, it would tend to make any enemy trigger happy for fear of being caught on the ground by such a preemptive strike.

Thus, both offensive and defensive weapons are part of the arms race, and in a situation of mutual deterrence, peace is most stable if both sides possess an assured capacity to inflict unacceptable damage on the other side even after absorbing a surprise attack. All other things being equal, it seems clear that an arms control agreement limiting ABM deployment by both the United States and the U.S.S.R. to, at most, a "thin" deployment is in the best interest of both countries. Paradoxically, in a world of nuclear weapons and mutual deterrence, improvements in defense can increase the likelihood of war.

The second point is that measures which reduce the probability of one kind of war can increase the probability of other kinds. As already mentioned, any reduction in the fear that smaller conflicts may escalate to nuclear war could serve to reduce inhibitions against engaging in limited wars. Further, any serious reduction in conventional military capability by means of arms con-

trol can reduce the capacity of established governments to defend themselves against insurgency, thus increasing the incentives for potential insurgents and therefore the probability of civil war.

The third point is that a lower level of armaments does not necessarily ensure a less violent war if war does break out. A conflict in which one opponent is well prepared may result in a sharp, short war with a quick decision. Cases in point might be the Arab-Israeli conflicts. On the other hand, if both or neither are prepared for war, early engagements might result in mutual destruction of ready forces followed by a long process of further mobilization and attrition and greater destructiveness and violence overall. It is not intended to imply that wars will always be more surgical and hence less violent when between militarily prepared nations, but only that lower levels of armament do not necessarily insure a less destructive war.

In attempting to limit the intensity of war, the most important thing we can ask of any arms control arrangement is that it reduce the prospect of large-scale war—particularly of large-scale war using weapons of mass destruction. In so doing we must realize that it may be necessary to accept some increased prospect of lesser wars. As before, no arms control measure can provide a panacea.

Relative Advantage. Historically, arms control or disarmament agreements have been successfully negotiated only where a careful attempt has been made to essentially preserve prevailing strength ratios among the participating nations. Despite this, any control or reduction of armaments will almost inevitably produce shifts in relative power.

Obviously, a change in relative power status will occur between the participants in the agreement and the nonparticipants. For example, a bilateral agreement between the United States and the U.S.S.R. to drastically reduce levels of armament might be successful in preserving the approximate balance of military strength between those two powers but would increase the relative strength of Communist China.

A second kind of shift is more subtle. No two countries have exactly the same kind of security problems, and therefore the utility of any particular kind of weapons system varies from country to country. Historically, Great Britain emphasized the importance of a strong navy, while continental powers placed first emphasis upon their armies. In the contemporary world, land-based, medium-range missiles would appear to have more utility for the Soviet Union than for the United States. Thus, even where some kind of numerical ratio is preserved, the implications of control or reduction of arms differ.

To pursue the matter further, it has already been pointed out that arms control can have the effect of making certain kinds of wars more likely or less likely. This can significantly affect the relative power of nations. For example, general and complete disarmament, that is the abolition of major weapons and forces, were it feasible, would have several noteworthy effects on the relative strength of nations. It would almost certainly reduce the influence of the major powers. By reducing the capacity of established governments to put down insurgents, it might encourage "wars of national liberation." This would not necessarily be a disadvantage to the West. Had general disarmament been in effect in 1968, it seems reasonable to believe that Czechoslovakia, for example, would no longer be a Soviet satellite.

In general, the effects of arms control agreements are to reduce the military power of the parties relative to the rest of the world and to cause a rather complex shift in their power relative to each other. The probability is strong

that under any substantial arms control, major powers will have to accept, on balance, some relative as well as absolute diminution in military power. Some relative disadvantage may, of course, be accepted if other arguments in favor of the agreement are strong. In the nature of things, however, any proposal which shifts the balance clearly in one's own favor relative to potential opponents is unlikely to be accepted by the other side. Furthermore, the two sides are not likely to view any specific proposal in the same way.

Arms Control and Military Expenditure. At a time when domestic claims upon governmental resources are climbing sharply, one of the particularly attractive features of the prospect of arms control is the expectation that large sums of money can be saved. At first glance this would appear to be so, for the essence of arms control is the acceptance of a lower level of military investment, at least of a particular kind, than would otherwise have been made. Unfortunately, the relationship is not quite that simple—limitations on armament do not necessarily save money.

Systems of arms control themselves can be quite expensive. The inspection requirements necessary to ensure observance of an agreement may involve elaborate and highly technical surveillance or inspections systems which, in some cases, may be more expensive than the armaments themselves. Thus, even in terms of direct expenditures, arms control does not necessarily lead to savings.

Somewhat more difficult to analyze is the matter of indirect effects upon long-term costs. There are at least three ways in which indirect effects can prevent us from realizing the anticipated savings from an arms control agreement.

First, effective controls on one kind of armament may simply shift the arms competition to another kind of armament or, perhaps, to a qualitative basis if quantity is controlled. In this case, arms expenditures may well continue as high as before, either through a redistribution of expenditures on military hardware or due to new R&D expenses and higher per-unit costs.

Second, an arms control agreement may serve simply to change the timing of expenditures. The historical tendency of the United States unilaterally to alternate periods of low armament with periods of urgent rearmament, as in 1941 and 1950, has almost certainly been economically wasteful as well as militarily awkward. To follow the same pattern through agreed arms control—if the agreement did not stick—could prove to be equally wasteful.

Finally, as discussed more thoroughly earlier, an improperly conceived arms control plan can actually increase the chances of war—and the costs of modern war are such that they far overshadow any feasible peacetime savings on arms expenditure. Any saving which resulted in increased probability of war could prove to be both temporary and illusory.

Quite certainly, economies through arms reduction *are* possible. The point is that savings are not automatic, but need to be carefully assessed in terms of both direct and indirect costs.

Arms Control and Nonmilitary Objectives. The final criterion against which any arms control proposal must be evaluated is its effect upon national objectives other than security. This is perhaps the most complex and most difficult to assess of all of the criteria—but so important that it cannot be ignored. No matter how we define our national goals—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; human dignity; freedom and justice for all—security is only a very partial means to the achievement of those goals, and there is a real danger that some of the measures which enhance security in a military sense are inimical to other goals.

There are a variety of considerations which fall into this category, ranging from the pacifist argument that all violence and therefore all implements of war are immoral and should be done away with on purely moral grounds, to the argument that the international tensions engendered by high levels of armament interfere with the proper operation of the international economic system. Beyond pointing out their potential relevance, any comprehensive discussion of these varying concerns is outside the scope of this article. Here it is sufficient only to consider the most important nonmilitary implication of arms control: the view that high levels of armament tend to corrupt democratic institutions.

There is a popular belief, in some ways a peculiarly American belief, that there is a basic incompatibility between standing military forces and the proper functioning of a democratic political system. Perhaps the most systematic and well-known statement of this view is Harold Lasswell's "garrison-state hypothesis." First stated in 1937 and periodically restated and revised since that time, the garrison-state hypothesis remains a leading theory of civil-military relations, not only among intellectuals, but in the popular press as well.

The essence of the garrison-state hypothesis is that a prolonged state of international tension inevitably drives internal politics in the nations concerned toward the domination of specialists on violence. Lasswell has described it as "a model in which the sequence marches from the relatively mixed elite pattern of the nineteenth century to military-police dominance in the impending future."[5] Power becomes centralized in the hands of the executive and the military, with the legislature becoming increasingly impotent. The central government expands until it penetrates the whole society. In Lasswell's view, the danger of thus destroying free institutions through the effect of long continued preparation for war is a greater evil than war itself.

To the extent that Lasswell's model is an accurate representation of the real world, an agreed program of arms control or reduction would help to preserve free institutions if it reduced international tensions and diminished tendencies toward centralization and governmental expansion.

The purpose of this discussion is not to attempt a detailed critique of the garrison-state hypothesis, but only to make a limited assessment. [An excellent critique can be found in Huntington's *The Soldier and the State.*][6] Few would argue that prolonged tension and high levels of armament are beneficial to a free society—though the linkage between democratic frailty and levels of armament is much less direct than Lasswell would have us believe. After all, the rearmament of Germany followed, not preceded, the collapse of the Weimar Republic.

The garrison-state hypothesis, as formulated by Lasswell, is in part based on a rather simplistic and villainous view of the professional military and an exaggeration of their strength in modern society. By far the strongest part of his case lies in the linkage between long-sustained high levels of armament and the tendency toward expansion of the government and centralization of power. In the presence of long continued and obvious external threats, there is a natural tendency toward the dominance of national security concerns over individual interests. Dissent may become treason, so that long-continued tension is inimical to personal liberty. The growth of large industries dependent upon military expenditures and the large bureaucratic requirements accompanying the maintenance of a large modern military establishment have a strong tendency to increase the size and role of the federal government and to centralize authority.

The two things which an effective

arms control agreement could reasonably be expected to do which would minimize the dangers outlined by Lasswell are: (1) by reducing international tensions and therefore national fears, reduce the degree to which security considerations influence governmental decisions; and (2) by reducing the level of armament, alleviate the tendencies toward bigness and centralization inherent in large-scale military organization and procurement.

The nonmilitary effects of any arms control or disarmament arrangement are not only an important consideration in evaluating it, but one of the more compelling reasons for entering into such an arrangement. The primary reason for our concern with national security is the preservation of those values we rate most highly. It would be self-defeating if, through the search for security, we lost that which we were attempting to preserve.

The Utility of Arms Control. Many people tend to see arms control or disarmament as an end in itself and therefore most discussions focus on the problem of how it is to be achieved, without careful consideration of what it is intended to achieve or what it is capable of achieving. Without a clear understanding of objectives, arms control can be self-defeating or even dangerous.

This discussion has examined five objectives against which any attempt at arms control should be evaluated. These objectives are: a reduction in the probability of war; a reduction in the intensity and duration of war; improvement of our position relative to potential opponents; a reduction in security costs; and achievement of nonmilitary objectives. These objectives apply to arms control and disarmament in all their forms, although there will be wide discrepancies in the way and extent to which various forms satisfy the tests. The objectives outlined may as appropriately be used to evaluate a scheme of unilateral disarmament as to evaluate a formal arms control treaty with elaborate inspection provisions.

Because of the multiplicity of objectives which may be served by arms control and because no arms control arrangement can serve all objectives equally, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the trade-offs required. An assessment of marginal utility is involved: it is necessary to compare the worth of incremental improvements in one area with losses in another. For example: we would almost certainly be willing to accept some loss in military capability vis-a-vis the rest of the world in return for a reduced probability of war and a lower level of military investment. We would not, or should not, accept an arrangement which promised large economic savings while increasing the probability of nuclear war.

No simple way of assessing these trade-offs exists, for fundamental and necessarily subjective values are concerned. There is no substitute for a careful analysis of any arms control arrangement in terms of the magnitude and direction of the effect it will have on each of the five possible objectives; the prospective gains must be weighed against the prospective losses. Although it is obviously desirable to achieve the greatest benefit and the least loss, the interests of potential opponents limit the gains to be expected. Fortunately, what is a gain for one is not necessarily a loss for the other, for both sides share a compelling interest in attempting to limit the violence, destruction, and bloodshed of human conflict. Few human values could survive a large-scale nuclear war. It is this shared interest that makes agreement on arms control possible—though by no means easy.

In passing, it is also important to note that formal agreements are not necessarily the only means to the achievement of effective arms control.

Far too little attention has been paid to the imaginative proposals for "graduated reciprocation in tension-reduction" made by Charles Osgood in his brilliant little book *An Alternative to War or Surrender.* In essence, Osgood's proposals amount to a program of reciprocal, stepped reductions in armament based upon tacit and informal bargaining rather than formal agreements. Although there are serious difficulties involved in his proposals, there is no reason to believe that they are any less susceptible to solution than those involved in a negotiated agreement. For example, one of the more serious difficulties, the lack of any effective inspection system, becomes much less serious because of the recent improvements in national surveillance systems.

Whatever the form of an arms control agreement, it is imperative that the ends we are trying to achieve be kept clearly in view and that we do not let arms control or disarmament become an end in itself. Yet there is also a serious danger that an awareness of all of the potential pitfalls of arms control will prevent it being undertaken seriously as a means to our security. This would be a mistake. Properly conceived and undertaken, arms control can greatly enhance our security and may very well prove to be a necessity if we are to avoid disaster.

As we become accustomed to living under the nuclear cloud, there is danger of forgetting just how precarious a position the world is in. A major war fought with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons could not conceivably be of either immediate or long-term advantage to anyone and might well be the occasion of universal disaster. Yet paradoxically, both we and the Russians, in the interest of national security, continue to stockpile weapons which, if used, would be a disaster for both.

It is difficult to be optimistic about the prospects for finding an easy way out of this dilemma. Mankind has not heretofore compiled a very enviable record in avoiding foreseeable disaster—but we *do* have to try, and the effort to achieve useful and workable arms control arrangements is one way of trying.

FOOTNOTES

1. William C. Foster, "Prospects for Arms Control," *Foreign Affairs,* April 1969, p. 418.
2. Grenville Clark and Louis B. Sohn, *World Peace through World Law,* 3d ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 206.
3. Evan Luard, *Conflict and Peace in the Modern International System* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), p. 225.
4. Hedley Bull, *The Control of the Arms Race,* 2d ed. (New York: Praeger, 1956), p. 7.
5. Harold D. Lasswell, "The Garrison-State Hypothesis Today," Samuel P. Huntington, ed., *Changing Patterns of Military Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1962), p. 51.
6. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: the Theory and Politics of Civil Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 346-350.

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