

1986

The Age of Vulnerability: Threats to the Nuclear Stalemate

Rodney W. Jones

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Recommended Citation

Jones, Rodney W. (1986) "The Age of Vulnerability: Threats to the Nuclear Stalemate," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 39 : No. 1 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol39/iss1/17>

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journalists to be objective and wise to manipulation. Totalitarian states simply trust no one and act accordingly. *Dezinformatsia* provides the reader with insight into how one uses lies, incomplete information or misleading information to weaken their adversary. Besides the general reader, this should be required reading for students in schools of journalism.

PETER C. UNSINGER
San Jose State University

Nacht, Michael. *The Age of Vulnerability: Threats to the Nuclear Stalemate*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1985. 209pp. \$26.95 paper \$9.95

This broadly gauged evaluation of the dilemmas of nuclear armaments will be found useful by students and the lay public as an introduction to the subject and to basic terminology and concepts. Experts on the subject will find it somewhat disappointing because of its survey character and lack of depth on issues of current concern. It is, however, readable and lucid and does not suffer the common failing of making the subject sound more esoteric than it is.

The title is an apt description of Nacht's central preoccupations with the nation's vulnerability to nuclear weapons and the stalemate between the superpowers that arises from the mutuality of that vulnerability. He explores a series of threats to the stalemate—or to the stability of mutual deterrence—from which nuclear war could arise. He sees these

destabilizing factors as the insecurity of Soviet leaders, the new assertiveness of US strategic policy, the high accuracy and first-strike potential of new offensive weapons and of the warfighting doctrines that go along with them, the failure of arms control agreements to stabilize weapons competition, the increasing frictions between the United States and its allies, and the trends that indicate the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries is proceeding.

There is a deep ambivalence in this book that is never really resolved, on two counts. The first is with the vulnerability issue related to hard-target weapons. Nacht recognizes this as theoretically destabilizing and not something to be complacent about—or at least not something that political interplay in a democratic society will allow leaders to ignore. But he appears to disbelieve in the final analysis that leaders on either side could really decide to initiate nuclear war. There is so much second-strike power available that it would be suicidal for either to launch an attack. So the stalemate is really stable. But if so, why worry? Why rehearse the other destabilizing factors? One is left with the feeling that the stability problem is not so simple, and that Nacht feels that too.

The other point has to do with the disappointment over the results of arms control. The tension here is that Nacht is a believer in the classical virtues of arms control, but knows that the scorecard of actual agreements (he exempts the ABM Treaty from this shortcoming) has yielded

very little that measures up to what those virtues are supposed to be. He is quite honest about that so that one can fully sympathize with his quandry. It is not quite so easy to follow how he seeks to resurrect arms control with his concept of "threat control," which supposedly is a more realistic objective, but once again he does not seem quite so sure: "If arms control is to play a constructive role in foreign and defense policy, it must be seen for what it is intended to be: threat control. Each side seeks to reduce the threats to its own society and, in military terms, to minimize the vulnerability of its forces. In the latter case, arms control is but one of several means—others include deception, mobility, and defenses—to satisfy this objective. Insofar as arms control can contain threats, especially threats against a country's capability to retaliate, it is a valuable diplomatic instrument that could help reduce the uncertainties of force planning. If arms control is to succeed, it must demonstrate through negotiated agreements that both sides have the political will to reach mutually satisfactory formulas that control the threats to them. If arms control achieves threat control, then all kinds of political payoffs are also within grasp. If, however, major threats continue unabated despite arms control negotiations and agreements, political opposition will eventually halt the process altogether. In short, for arms control to succeed and even continue to exist, it must control threats." To control threats may be too big a burden for

arms control, unless we restrict the meaning to the technical threat of first-strike advantage. That is where the rub now lies. Unfortunately, between real adversaries it takes threats to impose the desire for threat control as the basis for agreement. That is no simple task, and there seems with technological advance to be no final stopping point. The final threat to be controlled is not the weapons; it lies in the ambitions behind them. To Nacht's credit, he recognizes this. Much of his book is written (in a way that would please George Kennan) to chasten American propensities to expect that the Soviet Union can be made to change by the external exertion of a properly chosen policy that lies within our means.

The most original part of Nacht's book comes at the end with his discussion of geographical nuclear proliferation and the grim alternatives this poses for the United States. While he suspects the Soviet Union will also lose rather than gain from proliferation, he clearly points out that the costs of US security management will rise greatly and that in certain places—the Middle East or Persian Gulf being the easiest to visualize now—that proliferation will increase the likelihood of US-Soviet confrontation. In fact, the stability of the superpower stalemate could hardly not be threatened by the multiplication of other nuclear powers, however small they otherwise seem on an international scale.

The issues Nacht wrestles with are real and if he has not somehow

resolved them he can be excused because they are not easily tractable. His final note is realistic and sound, which is to work on the problems and manage them, for however small the chance they will be solved, there is much hope they can be kept in bounds or under control.

RODNEY W. JONES
Georgetown University

Staar, Richard F., ed. *Arms Control: Myth Versus Reality*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1984. 195pp. \$14.95

This compendium is the product of a conference held at and sponsored by the Hoover Institution in the latter part of 1983. Attended by over 60 governmental and nongovernmental experts in the field, the contents are a series of conference papers and commentaries on those papers.

The tone of the work is uniformly antiarms control, in the sense that the writers consistently challenge the notion that the arms control process per se is beneficial to the United States or that the results have generally served American interests. Rather, the recurring theme is the "myth" in the subtitle—that one can expect outcomes of value from strategic arms negotiations with the Soviet Union. The "reality" is that the Soviets have quite different—from the US perspective devious—purposes when entering into these negotiating fora, and that for cultural and other reasons, they are likely to abridge and even negate American expectations. The Soviets have, in a word, a contrasting agenda.

Although I largely agree with the positions argued in these pages, I was somewhat overwhelmed and disappointed with the unrelenting litany against strategic arms negotiations as they have become a part of the strategic landscape. There is, within these pages, very little disagreement or debate; the authors are clearly playing from the same sheet of music to a homogeneous crowd. The effort, and the intellectual task of interpreting it, would have been more challenging and stimulating had the other side of the story been presented and counterargued.

As in any multiauthored work, there are variations in both tone and quality. Generally speaking, the more ideologically committed papers were the weaker. Mark B. Schneider, an arms control counsel within OSD at the time of the conference, produced a paper "The Future: Can It Be Resolved?" that is little more than cheerleading for the Administration position at the time, including the uncritical presentation of contradictions in that policy, e.g., he argues that ICBMs are highly vulnerable at a time when silo-basing MX is being advocated. At the other end of the spectrum, Edward Teller's "Defense: Retaliation or Protection" and Richard Pipes' "Diplomacy and Culture: Negotiation Styles" are very scholarly, dispassionate works.

Because it forcefully takes a position which has not always been given adequate attention in Washington, this book merits attention and reading, especially among those who take a contrary position. Those