

BEYOND THE ARMS RACE

Despite the current *détente*, the arms spiral continues upward and some policy-makers are now suggesting that "enough is enough." Indeed it is, says the author—and a good time to stop talking about stabilizing the arms race and begin planning to reverse it.

by **AMITAI ETZIONI**

When President Johnson announced in April an additional cut in United States production of enriched plutonium, he was at pains to emphasize that this was "not disarmament . . . not a declaration of peace." Nevertheless, the signs of disarmament were seen at opposite poles: one liberal newspaper happily invoked the theme of swords into plowshares, and a conservative one greeted the an-

nouncement with charges of "weakness." Even quite sophisticated followers of the disarmament debate referred to reduction of American nuclear stockpiles, when in fact all that the President announced was a decline in the rate at which the United States would be adding to a stockpile already overstocked.

In short, the public arms debate is often conducted in oversimplified terms: on the one hand, generals advocate the more bombs the better, and on the other, housewives picketing the United Nations with baby carriages call for total disarmament "now." Although these extreme positions are vigorously argued by some, the range of serious discussion is considerably narrower. The real debate is between those who

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seek to slow the arms race and those who seek to reverse it.

Recent American armament policy is a combination of political attitudes and military strategy. By making all military advances seem unprofitable, aggressions are to be deterred or repulsed. He who wishes peace, the Pentagon recites, prepares for war. The military instruments of this policy are many and complex, but there are two major aims: to deter a nuclear attack on the heartlands of the West, and to contain Communist expansion. Large nuclear weapons, strategic bombers, and long-range missiles serve primarily the first purpose; conventional troops and subconventional forces, the second. For some years United States policy has been aimed at perfecting this double approach rather than at actively seeking an alternative. The West's non-nuclear capabilities have been strengthened to counter more effectively "low level" Communist challenges without making it necessary to resort to nuclear threats. The strength of the Army on active duty has been increased from 860,000 to 960,000, and the number of divisions ready for combat from 11 to 16. The drive to convince our European allies of the need for larger conventional forces has been renewed. The Special Forces, a counter-insurgency unit, have tripled since President Eisenhower left the White House.

At the same time, the major deterrent force has not been neglected. Reliance on strategic bombers has been reduced and reliance on "hardened" missiles—those protected in deep cement silos or on nuclear submarines—has been increased to insure our ability to strike back even after suffering attack. This "second strike" capacity is expected to make an attack on the West seem senseless to a potential enemy. It also allows the United States to refrain from striking first when an attack appears imminent, but not certain. In many ways, deterrence seems more "in" than ever.

Simultaneously, however, the deterrence system has been viewed with increasing concern in Washington. President Kennedy, addressing the United Nations on January 25, 1961, said: "Every man, woman, and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident, miscalculation, or mad-

ness." But the policy of maintaining peace through a balance of terror has been subjected to less revision and less public criticism than any other aspect of the arms race. No one would take seriously the advertising slogan of a fallout shelter manufacturer: "If not satisfactory, double your money back"; yet most Americans still believe in the stability of a national security system that has very much the same quality. Obviously, if we are still alive to say so, the major deterrence system will have worked; but *one* blowup and the few still living will find very little to collect. It is as if we were racing a sports car on a slippery track—every successfully completed lap heightens our sense of exhilaration, but the security of the upcoming lap is not increased. If anything, the false confidence gained from well negotiated rounds makes the next one more perilous. For instance, President Kennedy's masterly exercise of power during the 1962 blockade of Cuba exhilarated many Americans—after the blockade was over. When the results were known, it was conveniently forgotten that they were attained by leaning far over the brink.

The Johnson Administration is by no means indifferent to these dangers, but the notion that two piles of nuclear weapons balance each other, thus making attack suicidal, is still held by many military strategists, and there are others—although their numbers are diminishing—who have visions of an all-out strike and military "victory." Under the circumstances, it might be well to recall that the seemingly stable deterrence system could be unstabilized—despite the present *détente*—on extremely short notice.

The various ways in which unintended war could begin—by accident or miscalculation, by the proliferation of nuclear arms, or by a sudden advance in technology by one side—have been cited again and again. But perhaps the major danger of the deterrence system is escalation. In the past confrontations have remained limited: in Korea, to country-wide conventional war; in Quemoy and Matsu, to shelling of the islands; in South Vietnam, to guerrilla warfare. But the possibility of escalation, given the combination of strategic and conventional weapons as a base for the deterrence system, is far less theoretical than it seems. Supporting the government of South Vietnam with more than 15,000 American troops and massive arms shipments has been possible only because the Rus-

sians and Chinese have not matched American aid in their support of the Vietcong. Still, extension of the war into North Vietnam, and possibly China, is sporadically contemplated. Small wars invite big ones.

The danger of escalation to the level of nuclear war is even greater when it comes to direct confrontation with Russia. The NATO plans for defense of the routes to West Berlin specifically call for the use of tactical nuclear weapons in the event of a Russian refusal to respond to conventional pressure. The expectation is that such a situation would rapidly escalate to a Europe-wide nuclear war but conveniently go no further. The latest vogue in American strategic thinking is the design of "rules" for "limited" nuclear war on an even higher level. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, for example, has suggested that such a war could concentrate on destroying the enemy's military targets and missile bases and spare as much of the civilian population as possible. This notion is sometimes referred to as a counterforce, as opposed to a counter-city, strategy, and has led some of its proponents to suggest that some military targets, i.e., those close to cities, might have to be spared lest the Russians become confused as to which sort of attack they were experiencing and retaliate the "wrong" way. Even more fanciful is a theory of *controlled war* that has an important following in the Defense Department, and that allows for more than two levels of nuclear escalation and proposes preparing weapons with which to wage war at several levels.

The lay observer cannot but feel horror at the prospect of nuclear war of any size, shape, or level. He finds little comfort in artificial "rules" imposed by strategists and backed by computer-rationality. Nor can he dismiss the gnawing apprehension that expecting to be able to wage limited war only makes the possibility of such a war more likely.

This brings us to consider the more sophisticated arguments in favor of deterrence: that the likelihood of disturbing the balance of terror is small and that sane people do not worry about hypothetical events that have low probabilities. If we are governed by fear alone, it is said, we might as well stop breathing because the air might be contaminated, or stop crossing streets because a car might hit us. However, the likeli-

hood of nuclear war is not calculable statistically. We can state, though, without reservation, that the longer we exist under the balance of terror, the more likely it is to break down. While the risk each year might be the same or even smaller over the years, the *cumulative* danger is growing, and thus the search for a way out of deterrence is becoming intensified.

At the same time, we ought not to fail to understand that human life, unlike other forms of life, derives its substance from the values with which men imbue it. If these are swept away, human existence becomes worthless. Hence the search for an escape from the nuclear whirlpool ought not—indeed, cannot—be found by asking Americans, Russians, or any other group of human beings to sacrifice their basic beliefs. The end of the arms race must be sought in the context of respect for the fundamental tenets of our way of life and those of others.

Complete and general disarmament has such an appeal to human imagination that both the Soviet Union and the United States are on record as favoring it. If their offers are sincere and their desires as strong as speeches before the United Nations would indicate, it is difficult to understand what prevents the two powers from advancing a plan both could support. In fact, however, both the Russian and the American plans for total disarmament are, as Senator J. W. Fulbright effectively put it, "an exercise in cold war fantasy, a manifestation of the deception and pretense of the new diplomacy." Each power has forwarded proposals that, if accepted, would grant itself important strategic advantages. Each side includes a number of what the negotiators call "jokers," measures known to be utterly unacceptable to the other side. In short, total disarmament is impossible in the foreseeable future.

Leaving aside the extremes of total disarmament and continued reliance on the threat of nuclear war, the range of realistic discussion of the arms race now oscillates between arms control and arms reduction. It is beyond the scope of this essay to examine in detail the great variety of specific proposals that have been forwarded. For present purposes it is sufficient to define arms *control* suggestions as those for halting further production of strategic weapons,

maintaining armaments at approximately the current high level, and in other ways stabilizing the deterrence system. Arms *reduction* proposals, on the other hand, advocate cutting armaments significantly from present levels while preserving the ability to deter at gradually descending levels.

In effect, the current United States policy—preaching disarmament while practicing a slowed-down arms race—is aimed at arms control. Most supporters of arms control plans assume that there are only two military blocs, and that these blocs would agree to limit the number of nuclear weapons and missiles they retain and to stop production of other means of strategic warfare. Limitation of weapons and cessation of production would be verified through inspection. The stockpile retained, it is said, would have to be large so that a power violating the agreement could not gain a decisive advantage by concealing weapons. Russian unwillingness to negotiate arms control proposals is viewed as indicative of a lack of sincere interest in peace and in the increase in world stability that would result from acceptance of the Western offer to confirm the *status quo*. But precisely this is a major shortcoming of arms control schemes.

By offering to divide the world into two rival camps, arms control requires the Soviet Union (and commits the West) to accept global stalemate, with little provision for peaceful competition. Nor does arms control take into account the tempo or temperament of the world-wide revolution in other countries. Arms control advocates are concerned primarily with American-Soviet relations, with strategic forces in a bipolar world. But the world is not bipolar, and strategies that assume so will become increasingly outmoded as the small countries discover effective means of making their interests felt. Finally, arms control offers little if any prospect of reducing armaments, but requires extensive inspection.

A plan for freezing major strategic weapons, a key arms control measure, was in effect put before the House Armed Services Committee by Secretary of Defense McNamara in January 1963. The assumption underlying the plan is that "enough is enough." Once the United States is equipped with enough nuclear power to hit every important target in enemy territory, once its missiles are protected from attack, once a safety

margin is allowed for malfunctioning, further weapons production can be stopped. This contrasts sharply with previous practice, which was to order every weapon and weapons system for which some use could be conceived, and for which funds were available.

Secretary McNamara, on the other hand, has suggested that the United States is approaching a situation in which its force will be sufficient to deter any threat the Russians can make, and that it should refrain from further production of most strategic weapons. Indeed, the indications are that the United States *is* moving in that direction. No new strategic bombers have been ordered since November 1962; the production of nuclear bombs has been slowed since mid-1963; and the production of long-range missiles is to be phased out. Of course there is a great difference between simply slowing down the rate at which arms are added and beginning to eliminate them altogether. Therefore, the central question is, once a plateau has been reached, will it be possible to reduce arms, or are we to continue in that state of suspended horror President Eisenhower depicted in 1953: "two atomic colossi . . . doomed malevolently to eye each other indefinitely across a trembling world"?

The importance of the McNamara plan to halt the arms race is that it does not require negotiation or treaties. The United States can initiate it at any time. It will make, however, an enormous difference whether the plan is viewed as a *terminal* state (an arms control plan) or as a first step in the process of a *reversal* of the arms race (an arms reduction plan). The Defense Department seems to regard halting the upward arms spiral as a measure complete in itself.

On the one hand, the cessation of weapons production would indeed be a revolutionary achievement after almost two decades of the arms race. Moreover, the Secretary's plan has yet to gain the support of the armed services (Air Force strength in particular would be greatly reduced), of Congress (a number of Congressmen still would like the Defense Department to order the Skybolt missiles and RS-70 bombers Secretary McNamara considers unnecessary), or of the public. On the other hand, such a plan would not be enough. In the first place, at this high plateau, most of the dangers of the balance of terror would still exist. Second, the cessation of American strategic arms production depends on

the Russian response to American self-restraint. If the Russians continued to produce weapons, the American public and Congress would sooner or later apply pressure on the Administration to renew the race. But the Russians are interested in arms reduction, not in mere cessation of upward spiraling. Their attitude toward the McNamara plan illustrates this point.

Initially the Russians objected to any proposal that would permit both nuclear weapons and means of delivery to be retained by any party to a disarmament treaty. They suggested complete elimination of strategic weapons as a first step of rapid, four-year, total disarmament. American negotiators repeatedly explained that no nation could risk its fate by leaving no way open for answering a threat or deterring an attack by a party that violated the treaty. The Russians seem finally to have accepted this point. They are, it is reported, willing to consider the retention of some nuclear weapons and means of delivery by both sides until a later stage of disarmament, provided the initial freezing of the level of armaments be followed later by reduction. The Russians are averse to a mere halting of production, but willing, it seems, to match American initiatives to halt the increase of strategic forces if this is to be a step in the transition toward disarmament.

Their reasons are many. A much higher percentage of the economy is invested in arms in Russia than in the United States; further, the Russian economy, being fully employed, has few resources to spare. For the Russians, then, arms control means the maintenance of a painfully expensive military establishment; arms reduction would mean substantial savings. It has been suggested that Russia's high military expenses are not altogether undesirable, since these expenses limit the other things the government can do. This is one of those curious arguments that hold that anything bad for the Soviet Union must somehow be good for the United States. The fact is, however, that enormous military costs are imposed on both sides and, further, that both share the danger of nuclear war and hence the twofold benefit of reducing arms expenditures.

There is another reason, related to an element of Soviet culture. Americans, used to a pragmatic approach to problems, do not hesitate to work step by step; but in the Soviet Union, on

the other hand, people tend to think in terms of master plans worked out five and ten years in advance. If it is hard to imagine American agreeing to anything so sweeping as Premier Khrushchev's four-year plan for total disarmament, it is equally difficult to conceive of the Russians' agreeing to American proposals without asking what would follow.

Arms reduction might well afford a meeting ground first by halting the upward spiral, then by reversing it. Thus, the balance of nuclear power would move from a higher to a lower level, while the nations worked toward political arrangements that would eventually allow them to dispense with deterrence.

Arms reduction would imply parity between the United States and the Soviet Union. During the initial discussions of Secretary McNamara's plan, several Congressional leaders reacted uneasily to the implications of military parity with Russia. As long as the quest for weapon superiority was maintained, strategic parity could be largely ignored, and the debate could center on the hardware it would be best to add. But once it is suggested that enough weapons are enough and that production be stopped, we are required to admit openly that the best we can achieve is a stalemate. Many Congressional leaders have not quite digested this idea, and still seem to hope for American strategic superiority. Far too many politicians decry giving the Russians an "advantage" by allowing them to "catch up" with us.

It cannot be repeated often enough that a proliferation of American missiles, war heads, and bombers beyond those necessary for effective deterrence has little military value, that each target can be destroyed only once, that, in short, enough is really enough. In the nuclear age, parity is not the result of a numerical equality in weapons, as many American politicians seem to fear; it has in effect existed ever since both superpowers developed second-strike forces large enough to devastate each other. The familiar phrase "No one can win a nuclear war" must be more than a political exhortation—it must become the fundamental basis for any realistic planning.

The McNamara plan calls in effect for the acceptance of strategic parity as a means of halting the arms race. Moreover, the concept of parity could also be an inducement to arms reduction. In a sense the McNamara plan offers

to stop strategic weapons production even if the Russians go on for a while adding to their much smaller pile, and at the same time to build up the smaller American conventional forces to match those of the Russians. However, observers less committed to politics than to arms reduction have suggested plans for approaching numerical parity while maintaining strategic parity, so that the powers may be brought to rest on as low a level of armament as possible by matching cuts instead of build-ups. Admiral Sir Anthony Buzzard, of the Institute for Strategic Studies in London, suggests a "trade-off": the reduction of some Western nuclear forces against some Soviet conventional strength. Louis Sohn, of Harvard, has offered another plan, by which the two powers would neither abolish their different capabilities all at once nor maintain them to the end, but rather reduce their capabilities at different rates and bring them closer together as disarmament approached. Surely other plans could be devised; the need—whatever the details—is for reduction of the level of armaments in all major categories while improving rather than upsetting the balance of power.

The ultimate reduction each power will tolerate depends largely on one controversial problem: inspection. The more inspection allowed, it is said, the fewer arms needed; the less inspection, the more deterrent power needed. A good many observers conclude from this equation that the road to arms reduction is probably impassable, since the Russians are adamantly opposed to inspection. Yet this conclusion may be somewhat hasty.

First, some significant arms reduction can be accomplished without corresponding reduction by the other power. If, for instance, the United States found itself with a surplus of any particular sort of weapon, it could eliminate those that were unnecessary; if the Soviet Union responded with a similar cut of surplus material, fine; if not, the American position would not be weakened. Such steps have in fact been taken by both powers independent of an arms reduction agreement, and more could readily be taken as part of one.

There are many additional arms reduction measures that could be verified without introducing any new instruments of inspection. A study prepared for the Arms Control and Disarma-

ment Agency indicates that methods such as intelligence, open sources, voluntary self-disclosure, and common knowledge are applicable to a variety of arms reduction measures, including the cessation of atmospheric testing, the closing of foreign bases, the cessation of the extra-territorial deployment of aircraft and warships, and the destruction of fixed numbers of weapons at acceptable sites outside the boundaries of the participating nations.

Verification by electronic and photographic devices would apply to other measures. If countries allowed free inspection flights by satellites of the Samos type and by U-2 reconnaissance planes, much reduction could be verified without on-site inspection.

Although such plans as these might well allow arms reduction to proceed without undue risk, sooner or later the question of inspection will have to be faced. There is, however, a distinction, often overlooked, between inspection and verification. While it is necessary to verify compliance with the terms of an agreement, inspection is only one of many means of verification. Inspection, which implies sending teams into foreign territories, happens to be the means the Russians find most difficult to accept, not only because their society is still largely closed, but also because much of their present military strength rests on secrecy. The Russians have rejected all plans requiring extensive inspection, especially during the initial phases. But contrary to popular belief, they have agreed to various methods of rather extensive verification of arms reduction measures and, recently, even to some limited inspection. They themselves suggested the positioning of instruments—so called "black boxes"—in their territory to verify their compliance with the test ban agreement. We should recall that Premier Khrushchev agreed to inspection of the removal of missiles when the Cuban crisis was settled. One might still contend that the Russians do not agree to sufficient inspection, especially as the West defines "sufficient." But it is not correct to state that the Soviet Union rejects verification, or even inspection, in principle, and it might well be that the easing of international tensions brought about by the initial rounds of arms reduction would make inspection more tolerable than it is at present.

The borderline between arms control and arms

reduction is not sharp. Many measures can serve both: the "hot line," the test ban, a slowdown in arms production can simply be methods of stabilizing the deterrence system, or they can be the first steps toward arms reduction. At a time when a nuclear showdown is still possible and when both powers are charged with mutual suspicion, however, proposals to stop unnecessary production and abandon the traditional concept of military victory are often regarded as heretical and revolutionary. Arms reduction still seems farfetched to most people, and visualizing the details of final disarmament smacks of daydreaming. But arms reduction, if carried out, would be likely to provide a new political context for its own completion. Many steps now considered impossible would then seem obvious.

One approach to the last phase of arms reduction is zonal disarmament, a plan by which each of the participating nations divides its territory into zones that will be opened for inspection one by one. If the zones to be disarmed at each round were chosen by lot, strategic forces could be reduced gradually and equally, since neither side would know which of its zones would be disarmed next and would hence distribute its forces evenly among its zones. Disarming the last zone—and thus abolishing deterrence altogether—might have to wait until an international police force evolved, or until violations seemed unlikely.

Just as the final stage of arms reduction could be conducted in rounds, so the earlier measures would be broken into phases. The process need not be slow, however, for the transition from phase to phase can be as rapid as the powers wish to make them, just as the various steps of the Common Market treaty have been progressively accelerated as mutual trust grew. Thus, even if the plans for final disarmament seem artificial and contrived at present, it is important to begin.

The last stage of arms reduction, which will require extensive interbloc agreement and verification machinery, is hard to imagine without a world authority and international police force. New insight, however, suggests that we can proceed further than was long believed possible *without* far-reaching changes in international institutions. It seems quite likely that we can achieve a great deal through bilateral agree-

ments and "adversary" inspection, in which each superpower inspects the other.

Disarmament is so widely associated with the formation of an international police force that it has seemed to depend on the prior development of world government. But the experiences of the League of Nations and the United Nations have made abundantly clear the limits of impartial institutions in the present world, and many observers, noting the difficulty in reaching consensus even on minor matters, have concluded that disarmament is impossible. I am not saying that I would not like to see impartial procedures introduced as early as possible; I do, however, recognize the need to find measures that are as politically "inexpensive" as possible. To wait for more demanding solutions might be to wait too long.

The same situation applies to multilateral agreement. Despite the importance of recognizing the growing political significance of other countries—in part because of it—the United States and the Soviet Union should concentrate at first on bilateral arms reduction. This seems justified because for at least the next five years the nuclear forces of other countries will remain severely limited. For instance, even if the United States were to reduce its nuclear force to one-tenth its present size, from 40,000 weapons to 4,000, it would still retain 50 times the strength that China and France are expected to have for many years. It would surely be desirable to include all major powers in a comprehensive agreement banning nuclear weapons as soon as feasible. To claim that the two superpowers cannot make progress bilaterally is a favorite argument against disarmament, but not a valid one. On the contrary, the more the United States and the Soviet Union cooperate in reducing their forces, the greater will be their influence in urging their allies to participate in the arms agreement.

Almost the whole program of reduction of strategic arms, including zonal disarmament, could be accomplished by means of bilateral adversary inspection. The all-important first steps do not require inspection at all. Once verification became necessary, it would be sufficient for each side to check destruction of arms at a neutral location and to allow over-flights by the other side. Later, in the inspection phase, American personnel could inspect Russian disarmed

zones, and Russians American ones. Each side might call in representatives of its allies; both might also invite some neutral and United Nations observers, but the main responsibility would belong to the participating governments. This is not to suggest that international institutions should not be given more power. A disarmed world will not be without tensions; if it is to stay disarmed, peaceful outlets must be provided for. But it is only in the last phases of arms reduction that a major international police force would become a necessity. Since an international police force cannot spring into being on the last day of arms reduction, the earlier it begins to evolve the better. Nevertheless, contrary to widely held beliefs, there is no reason why arms reductions cannot proceed very far without such institutions.

Moreover, the evolution of international institutions seems to depend in part on arms

reduction, not the other way around. It is often stated that arms are merely symptoms of deeper ideological, political, and economic conflicts; that as long as no solution is found for these problems, there will be armies; that disarmament is a treatment of the symptoms instead of the illness. It may be so. But we would be ill-advised to postpone treating the arms fever, symptom though it may be, lest, raging uncontrolled, it kill the patient before a cure for the disease can be effected. Moreover, reducing the fever seems necessary not just to keep the patient alive, but to gain access to the deeper problems. The final round of arms reduction will require major changes in the international community, but we might never get started at all unless we bring the arms race under control. Halting *and* reversing the arms race, more than anything else, will alter our prospects from barren radioactive wastes to deserts watered by atoms-for-peace.

SEAS OF URCHINS FLOWER

by **ARCHIBALD HENDERSON, JR.**

Screams of hopscotch near the garage door
a basketball goal hangs above in winter
untie the skip rope that will slap the floor
between the beats of such as wait to enter.

Swings and seesaws, rested under snow, creak
on indefatigable air hour after hour.
A glossy Shetland winds on tours to slake
the guests that stirrup to a saddle's tower.

Spring rips stone February to keel
it over, pocked and spare, before its March
sings like the tuning-fork against a seal
frost isolates buds in more fast than church.

April's carousel of stars whirls off the last
of sleet a restless bird will tolerate.
Its record blindly plays a tuneful lust
and seas of urchins flower in its note.

Archibald Henderson, Jr., holds the Ph.D. from Columbia University, and has published poetry and articles in a number of magazines. This is his third appearance in the FORUM.