

## SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DISARMAMENT

1. *Limited nuclear war is feasible.*
2. *The United States desires and is prepared to implement disarmament.*
3. *A United States shelter program is desirable.*
4. *The United States must not recognize Red China.*

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The most fundamental misconception about disarmament is the sweeping, all-inclusive action suggested by the concept "disarmament." Perhaps we wouldn't care so much about nuclear weapons if some sort of absolute guarantee were provided that they would never be used. So nowadays we tag our approach "arms control," with disarmament as a special, limiting, and perhaps ideal, case. The primary goal of arms control is a sufficiently stable balance of forces wherein an agreement violation or a threatening action would start, at worst, an arms race, not a war.

The government's appreciation of this was evidenced by a reorganization that took place in September 1961. The old United States Disarmament Administration, an ineffectual, understaffed office in the State Department that had existed for only one year, was superseded, by Congressional act, by a new agency jointly responsible to the President and the Secretary of State.

The responsibilities of the new Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, or ACDA, include research for policy formulation, preparation for and management of United States participation in international negotiations, public information, and preparation for and direction of United States participation in any international control systems that may be included in treaty arrangements.

These responsibilities are primarily discharged through four bureaus — International Relations, Weapons Evaluation and Control, Science and Technology, and Economics.

Our study group at JPL was established earlier this year under the primary direction of the Science and Technology Bureau. Its particular goal is to contribute to those elements of arms control that pertain to outer space; however, studies by our group and by the Agency *may* deal with substantive provisions, political aspects, verification measures and procedures, international organizational patterns, and economic impacts of arms control agreements.

The literature of disarmament is certainly replete with contradictions, even among the experts, and what I see as misconceptions may be another person's dogma. In presenting the following misconceptions, I should also explain that one misconception doesn't necessarily follow from another, no priorities are suggested, and the thoughts are selective, not comprehensive.

### *Limited Nuclear War is Feasible*

In case war breaks out somewhere, can its dimensions be restricted? Yes! There have been numerous examples since the second World War,

including Korea, the Congo, Hungary, Suez, and Cuba.

The Korean War can help identify several concepts. The first is deterrence, which can be defined as the prevention of a hostile action by the threat of forcible retaliation. At the time of Korea the Strategic Air Command represented our deterrent. It failed; that is, war started. An outbreak of hostilities signifies the failure of deterrence. A second concept is that of limited war. Korea started as a less than total war and remained limited, even though the United States and Russia were intimately involved. A third concept is that non-nuclear war is feasible. Nuclear weapons were available at the time of Korea and were not used.

A hopeful sign is that, beginning with Korea, both the U. S. and Russia have continued to use limited, unilateral arms control concepts. One must be careful when using the word "unilateral," for to many persons "unilateral action" has negative connotations of surrender or a lack of resolution, instead of, simply, action taken in the absence of formal agreement. We must also remember that limited conflict requires two sides to keep it limited, two sides that strike some sort of tacit bargain not to exceed certain restraints.

A main point here is the practical nature of these concepts. As opposed to many of the postulations of the game theorists — people who suggest courses of action based on completely theoretical considerations — we are attempting here to emphasize what really has happened and still is happening, what restraints have been and still are recognized. We can already refer to a tradition for the non-use of nuclear weapons.

Why have these restraints been exercised? What does actually limit a war? Why, for instance, do conflicts so often stop at national boundaries? One can think of examples: Indo-China, Berlin, Korea. What makes a border a compelling place to draw a line in the event of war in that area is principally that there is usually no other *plausible* line to draw.

The distinction between nuclear and non-nuclear (or conventional) weapons is, or should be, crystal clear. A plausible line may be drawn. But within the family of nuclear weapons, there are no distinctions — no sharp discontinuities in the magnitude of weapons effects, the form in which weapons may be employed, the means of their conveyance or delivery, or the nature of their targets. One can talk of a 40-megaton weapon delivered with an ICBM or a one-ton weapon delivered from a six-shooter. There is a continuous spectrum, and any boundary — any intermediate

limit — is entirely arbitrary.

Now, if it takes two to keep a war limited, and if the two parties, as they have in the past, strike some kind of bargain without explicit communication, the particular limit has to have some quality that distinguishes it from the continuum of possible alternatives; otherwise there is little basis for confidence on each side that the other acknowledges the same limit. The boundary between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons is the *only* one that I can imagine.

It is and will be sufficiently difficult to limit a conventional war, much less a nuclear one. It is extremely hard to imagine how the escalation of a limited war could be avoided. ("Escalation" here has its usual meaning: I drop one bomb, my opponent two; I drop three bombs, my opponent four.) Aside from the strange concept of limited war which usually implies a war fought "elsewhere," we might question how a major power will react today if its *own* borders are threatened. Can we imagine how the notion of "gentlemenly" (that is, conventional) war could survive the hatreds of a population facing defeat? Is it clear that a nation would more readily accept a conventional than a nuclear defeat? Which factor will prevail, the value of the objective or the nature of the weapons used to attain it?

Our inability to approach satisfactory answers to difficult questions such as these shouldn't deter us from adopting those positions that *are* tenable. While many influential persons demand a full spectrum of tactical nuclear weapons, I am unaware of a coherent, plausible strategy for using these weapons in limited nuclear war. There is continuing disagreement among these persons, within our government and within the Western alliance, as to just what such a strategy should consist of.

In attempting to counter what I consider to be this misconception, I would stress four points:

1. There is, relevant to the process of limiting war, a clear distinction between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons.
2. The principal inhibitions of the use of nuclear weapons may well disappear the first time they are used.
3. On the occasion of *our* first use of nuclear weapons, we should be at least as concerned with the precedents we establish as with our original tactical or strategic objectives.
4. We should recognize that the enemy will be making similar decisions in determining the nature and extent of *his* response.

## *The United States Desires and is Prepared to Implement Disarmament*

One certainly might reach this conclusion if one were familiar with the United States proposals for a nuclear test ban and for general and complete disarmament. Our April 1962 treaty proposal would establish an International Disarmament Organization within the framework of the United Nations, and, as the treaty progressed from Stage I to Stage III, the United Nations would become increasingly involved in various U. S. affairs. (Of course, the affairs of other countries would be similarly "interfered with.") One of the basic provisions of our treaty proposal calls for an international police force that would evolve from Stage I through Stage III into a force that ultimately would be so strong that no state could challenge it. This means that U. S. security would ultimately depend upon this international police force.

Public opinion in the United States frequently suggests a considerable eagerness to reach deep into Soviet life and activities and, at the same time, a deep reluctance to accept intrusion here, particularly by a body which may include Soviet or satellite inspectors. International realities, on the other hand, would seem to require reciprocity.

In addition to the detailed description of just which armed forces, armaments, nuclear delivery vehicles, and weapons would be reduced in each stage of disarmament, considerable space in our Geneva proposal is devoted to the inspection system that must necessarily accompany these disarmament activities. Some of the principal features that could be anticipated in such an inspection system are as follows:

1. A corps of international personnel will be admitted to the United States to carry out inspection to assure compliance.
2. These inspectors may freely enter government installations, perhaps including offices engaged in military and foreign affairs, and account for equipment and materiel.
3. They may subpoena and interrogate persons engaged in activities related to armaments, or persons suspected of unlawful activity, and require them to answer appropriate questions or produce relevant documents and records.
4. They may require reports and returns from private citizens and corporations engaged in activities related to the manufacture of armaments.
5. They may come at any time to factories or

industrial or commercial establishments dealing in equipment or materials relevant to the control agreement and inspect in any detail necessary the processes and fruits of production. Inspectors may also be permanently stationed in some establishments.

6. They may interrogate scientists and inspect laboratories.

You can see that what is subject to inspection in our disarmament proposal will be rendered open and unclassified, and the present practice of classification of defense materiel might be virtually superseded. Laws which forbid the disclosure of defense information could be replaced by laws which require officials and citizens of the United States to disclose such information and, indeed, perhaps by laws which make it criminal *not* to disclose such information.

One can speculate on the reception that provisions such as these will receive when their full import must be debated by the members of Congress. One writer on arms control has suggested, with some wisdom, I think, that it is not at all wise to try to transfer to the disarmament arena political arrangements which would otherwise be unattainable *because* they are politically unacceptable.

Consider the reception of this kind of planning in the U. S. not only in Congress and elsewhere in the government, but also in the population at large. Is it true that Americans are ready to accept the political and social effects of disarmament and that the Russians are the villains who are obstructing progress in these areas?

It may be pertinent here to refer to the characteristic American view that peace is the "natural" state of man. It follows that, since Americans are, by definition, peaceful, then negotiations are futile unless the *Soviet* system changes. There is even the opinion that we should be extremely suspicious if the Russians *do* under present circumstances accept a U. S. proposal, for we can then presume that we have made an error.

One more point: Unfortunately, to the layman, to those not in the secret councils, accepting the merits of our policies must generally be a matter of faith. The details of the efforts of the United States Government and of other governments in regard to disarmament are frequently shrouded in high classifications.

Aside from Congress, who, of course, must pass enabling legislation, who *are* the people in our government who actually work out the details on arms control and will implement disarmament if

and when it occurs? Many of these people are civilians attached to the executive branch, to the Departments of State and Defense. Here is an anomaly, for not infrequently a considerable gap exists between the private and public aspects of our national life, as illustrated by the fact that all too often eminent men address themselves to matters of national policy only when they reach high office. Each administration appoints new people to jobs in agencies like the ACDA, people who previously were attorneys, businessmen, educators, or scientists. They may be able and intelligent and still have zero experience in any aspect of national or international affairs.

If this is a valid thought, and if foreign affairs and arms control are as intimately involved as I think they are, then is it surprising that some observers sometimes wonder if we have any coherent policy or strategy? With new, uninitiated people continually introduced into decision-making situations of almost unimaginable gravity, we should probably expect what, in fact, we find: group studies and committee decisions, or, rather, compromises reflecting at best the highest common denominator. There is more concern with how things are than with what things matter. Momentum is confused with purpose.

### *A United States Shelter Program is Desirable*

Is it advisable to discuss bomb shelters? Here is one area where, relative to life in the atomic age, many Americans feel they have some positive, personal control over their future. Besides, the obvious features of bomb shelters are *really* obvious; for example, if a large national shelter program is undertaken, in the event of a nuclear attack some people's lives *will* be saved.

You can even draw curves, after stating your particular assumptions. With any given number of shelters, the heavier the attack, the greater the casualties. With any given attack level, the greater the number of shelters, the fewer the casualties.

Let's consider the not-so-obvious. How can private citizens, not to mention government experts, estimate the effects of a thermonuclear attack? How can they scale upwards from familiar tragedy (familiar meaning the newspapers or *Life* magazine, not personal experience)? How can they take the giant step from a serious fire, earthquake, or flood, or even a Hiroshima bomb, to a thermonuclear war in which each bomb may be equivalent to all of the explosives detonated in World War II? How can we assess panic or shock; or, in the

event of an extraordinarily heavy attack, how can we assess anarchy?

This may sound pretty emotional, and perhaps it is, but some observers see in the "emotional" the not-so-obvious side of a shelter program that *must* be considered.

A civilian defense program seems to represent to many a highly authoritative threat of personal death and social destruction of even greater magnitude than the threat of nuclear weapons per se, since the program directly warns that war is highly possible and even imminent. Civil defense fits into a view of the world in which negotiation has failed and war is looming, whereas disarmament fits into a view of the world in which negotiation seems possible and war avoidable. The shelters themselves might be symbolically even more threatening to hopes of disarmament than the call for civil defense. The combined promise of life and warning of death could involve such strains in individual hopes and fears as to make possible much serious and damaging emotional interplay among most Americans: among individuals, who must make decisions about their families; among governmental officials, who must set policy; among political leaders, who must authorize the necessary appropriations; among businessmen, who must provide protection in factories; among merchants, who must be responsible for the construction of shelters; and among scientists, who must assume technical responsibility. And what if a mistake is made? What kinds of new tensions would arise?

Civil defense, rather than a passive military measure, is seen by some as a blatantly offensive move. Then the question is whether or not a commitment to the proposed program will tend to restrict the government's freedom to negotiate matters of arms control and disarmament.

The United States is the only Western power capable in the near future of developing any given deterrent strategy. Theoretically, we have all of the options; we can strike first, second, hard, not so hard, or not at all. England's Alastair Buchan has considered the effect on our allies of a U. S. shelter program. He finds, as the United States and Russia develop increasingly invulnerable deterrents, increasingly heavier blows must be struck if they are to be effective. And, the heavier the attack that is necessary, the less credible will be the American resort to it, the American reputation being what it is. Buchan finds that this would be true even if the U. S. were to undertake a massive civil defense program.

But the option of a civil defense program is not open to our European allies, who don't have the

warning time, the wealth or resources, or the *raison d'être* — the invulnerable deterrent. A sheltered America and an unsheltered Europe would be an extreme, to say the least, source of tension within the Western alliance.

Time is what really defeats the shelter program. Back in 1 or 2 B.C. (before continental missiles) Civil Defense officials spoke of three-hour warning times — “plenty of time” for a population to go underground. More recently, these officials have spoken, hopefully, of thirty minutes’ warning. Tomorrow, or perhaps the day after, Russia will have an effective nuclear submarine fleet, similar to our own, and I’ll let *you* imagine what warning time will be available to most Americans and what use shelters will be under those circumstances.

### *The United States Must Not Recognize Red China*

It is difficult at any time to attempt to discuss arms control or disarmament and not become embroiled in politics, and it is particularly difficult when Communist China is the country being discussed.

Communist China is an especially serious facet of what is generally referred to as “the Nth country” problem. Those concerned with this problem, and most arms control commentators seem to be, find increasing instability with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by each additional country. The United States was secure in a “stable” arms situation while she maintained her nuclear monopoly. Later, we learned to fear Russia as a second-power problem. There is irony in the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union then thought in terms of a third-power problem, Great Britain in terms of a fourth-power problem, France in terms of a fifth-power problem, and so on.

The problem, the instability, consists of the increased probability that something will go wrong, or, according to Murphy’s law, the more that *can* go wrong, the more *will* go wrong. The greater the number of countries that possess nuclear weapons — countries with diverse and often opposing ideologies, territorial claims, and defense strategies — the greater the opportunity for lack of understanding or lack of communication or for an accident that could escalate into a major disaster.

While many countries have the potential of developing nuclear weapons, which country is *more* likely to do so in the near future than Red China? And would any other country, when its first

atomic device was exploded, have a more threatening effect on U. S. security and morale? If the principal threat of Communist China is her acquisition of nuclear weapons, and if we see in nuclear weapons a peril to mankind, how is the present impasse to be resolved?

The suggested misconception was that the U. S. must not recognize Red China; we must not carry on any negotiations that would imply recognition. How can we even think of arms control or disarmament negotiations with the knowledge that Communist China, or *any* country capable of a major threat, will be excluded from the conference table? While the danger certainly exists that any potential Nth country might simply *refuse* to accede to a treaty, we can never know if an attempt is not made.

Lester Pearson said that we prepare for war like precocious giants and for peace like retarded pigmies. The 1962 Arms Control and Disarmament Agency’s budget is approximately six million dollars. (Last year it was only one million dollars.) The military budget is about fifty billion dollars. I don’t know if matters like arms control, disarmament, and peace can be expressed satisfactorily in terms of dollars, but these figures *must* give some idea of how and where national efforts are being exerted.

Our foreign policy difficulties may be less due to the choice of *wrong* alternatives than to the lack of *any* choice of alternatives. Inadequate arms control proposals, reflecting compromises among competing groups rather than logically consistent policies, have perhaps been inevitable. In any choice between rigidity and flexibility, Henry Kissinger sees that only in the purposeful is flexibility a virtue. U. S. bargaining techniques have stressed “reasonable” proposals rather than sought to explore *whatever* we wished, regardless of what the given Russian attitude may have been. We must have more positive goals than divining Soviet intent.

It is sometimes argued that to perpetuate military deterrence is to settle for a so-called peace based on fear. The extent of the “fear” involved in any arrangement — total disarmament, negotiated mutual deterrence, or anything else — is a function of confidence. If the consequences of transgression are plainly bad — bad for all parties, and little dependent on who transgresses first — we can take the consequences for granted and call it a “balance of prudence.” What keeps us from stepping off a train before it stops is not “fear”; we just know better.