Introduction

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Introduction*

*Russell Hardin and John J. Mearsheimer

The papers in this issue were first presented at an Aspen conference that was organized to bring together two groups, philosophers and strategists, concerned with nuclear weapons, especially with the ethics of nuclear weapons policies. A striking feature of the conference was the extent to which the philosophers and the strategists, at least at the outset, each viewed the other group as monolithic in its beliefs. This is perhaps not surprising in light of the unfortunate fact that the two groups have had little contact with one another. At the same time, however, each group saw its own members as having quite diverse positions. As the conference progressed it became apparent that there is some truth in both these somewhat contradictory observations. There is considerable diversity within each group, but there are also marked similarities in the ways members of each community approach and answer certain fundamental questions.

These differences and similarities are naturally reflected in the following articles. The purpose of this brief introduction is to put those articles into a broader context: first, by outlining those themes that unite philosophers and those that unite strategists while also paying careful attention to differences between the two communities and, second, by describing the variety of views within each community.

UNIFYING THEMES

The theme that most unites strategists is that they are "realists" as this term is used in the literature of international relations. In philosophers' jargon, they view the world of nation-states as essentially a Hobbesian state of nature. This view is so widely taken for granted that it is seldom made explicit. It is a view defended here by a philosopher, Christopher Morris, and a strategist, Robert Tucker, but it is held by virtually all

* We are indebted to the participants in the conference on ethics and nuclear deterrence at Aspen, Colorado, September 1–4, 1984, for discussion and clarification of many points in this article. We are also grateful to the Ford Foundation and to the Exxon Education Foundation for support to organize the conference and to write this overview and to the Aspen Institute and the Aspen Meadows and their staffs for hosting the conference and its participants. There could be no more pacific place to consider the issues of nuclear weapons.

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strategists. The view underlies the claim that deterrence is necessary for reasons of state or of survival. It is sometimes defended in other than Morris's Hobbesian terms with the claim that, after all, the state in our time is the condition for the pursuit of most moral values: hence the state must be defended. For example, if one is concerned with nuclear weapons because their threatened use violates the autonomy of innocents who are held hostage as a means to the end of protecting one's fellow citizens, then one must also grant that failure to defend one's state will lead to the violation of the autonomy of these fellow citizens. This argument is met by the contrary observation that the form of the defense of the state may well undercut some of the most important moral values that are supposedly supported by the state, as Sissela Bok and Richard Ullman argue.

A second theme that unites virtually all strategists is the belief that the Soviet Union is a formidable adversary that will exploit every foreign-policy opportunity presented to it. It cannot be trusted as, say, Canada or France can be. Hence, the United States must confront the Soviet Union with a strong defense. The intensity of this view, while held with varying degrees of strength among strategists, is seen by some philosophers as a déformation professionelle of the strategic community. But it is also true, and necessary to their belief in deterrence, that most strategists are inclined to think that a strong defense posture will force Soviet leaders to act less aggressively because these leaders are assumed to be rational, even cautious, in their pursuit of foreign-policy interests. There is little disagreement with Freeman Dyson's assertion that the "feasibility of influencing Soviet nuclear policies does not depend crucially on whether" a particularly hostile or a milder view of Soviet political character is right.¹

The theme that most nearly unifies philosophers who write on nuclear deterrence is their concern with the question whether we may do—or threaten—evil that good may come. Is it permissible to threaten a nuclear holocaust, even if such a threat is very likely to deter the other side from ever starting a nuclear war? One strategist at the Aspen conference said that, in the hundreds of hours he had spent at other conferences on nuclear strategy, this question had never been raised. Philosophers of a utilitarian persuasion are not generally inclined to formulate such a question either since they generally weigh gains and losses that result from specific actions and then choose that action or policy that can be expected to produce the greatest net good. They do not judge kinds of action to be inherently bad independently of such a weighing. But it is a peculiarity of nuclear deterrence that the enormity of what it threatens forces even utilitarians to worry about this question to some extent because it challenges them to see how far they are willing to push their utilitarian principles. Hence, it is a, often the, central question motivating philosophical discussion.

of nuclear weapons, which seem to pose the ultimate test of any answer to the question whether we may do evil that good may come.

The strategists, as realists, simply ask what is the best deterrent strategy. They have moralized Machiavelli’s concern with the narrow interests of the prince into the view that national leaders in the modern state should defend the interests of their peoples. Although the scope of this latter view is narrower than contemporary moral theorists would want, it is radically broader than Machiavelli’s view of the prince’s simple egoism. And it is broader than the strategists’ stated concern with “prudence” suggests: they see national leaders as prudent not in the sense that individuals may be prudent in seeking their own narrow interests but rather in the sense of doing their best to serve the interests of their people.

The ends of strategists are fundamentally normative and other regarding. They are concerned not with the well-being of all others, of course, but primarily with that of Americans and their allies. They are consequentialists, indeed, they are essentially utilitarians with limits. And, unlike the philosophers represented here, they are in very nearly complete agreement about what their ends are. They think that the prevention of war is a clear-cut moral imperative of our time. They differ only on their assessments of what are the most effective means to this end, although there appears to be considerable agreement that nuclear weapons provide an effective deterrent. Some strategists, including Robert Art, Joséf Joffe, and George Quester, think that the nuclear deterrent is so effective that it may finally be a good thing. One could read their arguments to say that we are fortunate to have created nuclear weapons because, without them, it is likely that the world would be a more dangerous place. This is a position that seems not to have appealed to philosophers, not even to utilitarian philosophers, although, if utilitarians agreed with these strategists’ analysis of the benefits of deterrence, they would presumably agree that the weapons are beneficial.

As moral theorists, the philosophers do not generally even address the strategists’ policy question about effective means but ask rather whether our deterrent strategy is morally right. And here the focus is almost exclusively on a deterrent posture predicated on the threat of massive retaliation or what is commonly called “assured destruction.” Philosophers typically are concerned with limited nuclear exchanges only insofar as they might be expected to increase the risks of a massive strategic exchange. This focus is arguably justified by the view of many strategists that we do not really know what would happen if there were a limited nuclear exchange or even a conventional war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Such confrontations might escalate in unexpected ways to all-out nuclear war.² Many philosophers are bothered by the argument

2. See inter alia Desmond Ball, *Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?* Adelphi Papers, no. 169 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Autumn 1981); Paul Bracken,
articulated by Thomas Schelling and widely accepted among strategists that nuclear weapons deter even lesser acts of aggression because of uncertainty whether a limited war might escalate to all-out war. In any confrontation with the Soviet Union, Schelling says, the perils that we face are “not as straightforward as suicide [implicit in a spasm war of mutual annihilation], but more like Russian roulette.”

Robert Goodin supposes that to have the possibility of mutual assured destruction in the background is to take a risk that, no matter how small the probability that we will experience the final disaster, is plainly immoral. Most philosophers of a deontological bent—such as Thomas Donaldson and Gerald Dworkin—generally agree with him because they think it wrong under any circumstances to risk killing massive numbers of innocents. Since the only way we can avoid such a risk altogether is to dispose of our nuclear weapons, Goodin thinks we must therefore disarm. This seems to be the inescapable conclusion of any strong deontological argument against the killing of innocents, with the only caveat that purely defensive weapons might possibly be retained.

Finally, we should note here a supposedly moral position that is often taken on this issue, that may even be the popular view, which is that we have the right under some principle of reciprocity to strike back at Soviet cities if the Soviet Union destroys American cities. This position was actually stated in discussions at Aspen, by at least one strategist and at least one philosopher. But most moral philosophers reject it as incoherent on the ground that there can be no sense in which many—perhaps the vast majority—of the residents of the Soviet cities we might destroy could plausibly be held responsible for the destruction of American cities.

No matter what disagreements we may have on the issues of nuclear weapons, Gerald Dworkin and Richard Wasserstrom note, surely we must agree that no credible position on collective responsibility can include young children. Hence, any attack on Soviet cities must of necessity involve the wholesale killing of innocents. Without a relevant notion of collective responsibility, the justification from reciprocity can only be a morally flawed justification. It is a justification that may be rooted in the typically individual focus of most ethical argument. But one must be careful in jumping from individual-level to group-level claims. As Thomas Donaldson argues, the so-called domestic analogy—that I may rightly use force against someone who harms or threatens my family—simply does not fit the system of nuclear deterrence through the threat to destroy cities because many of those in the threatened cities cannot meaningfully be said to threaten or harm us.


3. Thomas C. Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), chap. 3.
4. Ibid., p. 94.
Those who are given to justifying deterrence on the grounds of reciprocity should rather claim that the policy is utilitarian on either a general view (that counts the interests of all people equally) or a limited view (that weights the interests of Americans and their allies especially heavily). As noted above, the position of many strategists seems typically to be utilitarian on a limited view. But they seem to think it necessary to justify taking a limited rather than a general view, and the crude and largely misdirected argument from reciprocity may be brought in for that justification. The alternative is simply to assert the limited view, as many realists implicitly do when they refer to reasons of state. If one is to justify attacking Soviet cities nonetheless, the ground will have to be that other considerations are overriding, as Steven Lee argues and as would be assumed in a utilitarian argument for deterrence, or that morality is forfeit after a nuclear attack, as Christopher Morris and, by implication, Robert Tucker argue. Deterrence that threatens children may be morally right as a device to produce the better result overall, but this is not to say that to retaliate would be right as a matter of reciprocity unless the retaliation is directed at only those responsible for attacking us.

Perhaps this is the most important lesson moral philosophers offer for the debate over nuclear policy: the popular view of the Soviet-American conflict as us against them and of nuclear retaliation as an act of vengeance cannot be squared with the threat of immolating tens of millions of children. If Medea had merely killed Jason out of vengeance, Euripides would have had no subject for his play. That she killed her children to revenge Jason—"this is the best way to wound my husband"—made her a moral monster. To justify the immolation of a generation of Soviet children simply by right is to sink to the level of Medea's moral depravity or to be incoherent.

THE DIVERSITY OF POSITIONS

What most divides strategists is their varied assessments of the objective facts of deterrence, of what weapons and what strategies for employing those weapons best serve deterrence. The most important question here is whether our current strategic doctrine and the weapons that support it are adequate for deterrence. The range of opinion on this matter is impressive, although one can identify three broad positions:

1. The first position, as articulated by Robert Art, expresses considerable satisfaction with the status quo. First, Art argues that the system of deterrence as it is presently constituted is extremely stable, that the so-called balance of terror is not delicate, and that it is not likely to be significantly affected by changes in the level of armament in either direction for the foreseeable future. Second,

he maintains that, because nuclear weapons are so awful in what they threaten, they have made leaders on both sides very cautious and thus have significantly reduced the likelihood of any kind of war between the superpowers.

2. The second position, as articulated by Colin Gray, reflects considerable dissatisfaction with the status quo. First, Gray believes that it is morally untenable to base deterrence on the threat to destroy large portions of each side’s population. He argues that we have a moral responsibility to defend our population. Second, Gray believes that it is strategically desirable for the United States to have the capability to fight and win a nuclear war. Thus, he favors fundamentally altering our strategic-force posture by developing counterforce weapons and strategic defensive systems. He wants to transcend the balance of terror and develop what strategists call a warfighting, damage-limiting capability.6

3. A third position, represented by Richard Ullman, is also characterized by dissatisfaction with the status quo. Although Ullman thinks it is not possible completely to eliminate nuclear weapons, he favors substantially denuclearizing international politics. He wants significantly to reduce the size of the superpowers’ nuclear arsenals and, especially, to eliminate counterforce weapons, which he considers highly destabilizing. Unlike Art, he is not convinced that the present nuclear balance is very stable. Moreover, he questions the belief that nuclear weapons have deterrent value that goes beyond simply deterring the other side from using its nuclear weapons.

Ullman does not go all the way and argue for complete disarmament because he is convinced, as is almost everyone who writes on this topic, of what Thomas Donaldson calls the “technological recalcitrance” of nuclear weapons: they cannot be disinvented, and, hence, one way or another we will have to deal with them. Ullman’s argument for a reduction in nuclear armaments is a conclusion with which many philosophers agree (see the articles by Jan Narveson and Steven Lee); indeed, perhaps the large majority of philosophers writing on this topic would agree that substantial arms reductions would be morally preferable to the current state of affairs and to a continued arms race. Although most philosophers seem to agree with Ullman’s call for significantly reducing the size of the strategic retaliatory forces of the superpowers, some of them add a fourth position to those of the strategists: unilateral disarmament by the United States (see Robert Goodin’s article). This position enjoys only limited support among philosophers and none at all among strategists.

It should be clear already from this discussion that philosophers are no more united in their views than are strategists. Christopher Morris supports the American system of nuclear deterrence on the ground that notions of morality are forfeit once one’s nation has been attacked in an international system that is basically a Hobbesian state of nature. Jan

Narveson also supports it but on the more or less utilitarian ground that a system of nuclear deterrence produces the best outcome on the whole. Others object to deterrence based on the threat of killing massive numbers of innocents in cities but think that at least purely defensive and certain counterforce weapons are legitimate insofar as these do not disproportionately threaten innocents (see the articles by Gerald Dworkin, Gregory Kavka, and Jeff McMahan). While these philosophers have major disagreements with Gray's position on war fighting, they share his view that it is morally preferable to defend against deaths in the West by defending against weapons than to prevent the use of the weapons by threatening retaliation. In the jargon of the strategic community, they prefer deterrence by denial to deterrence by punishment.

Yet it should be clear that the diverse conclusions of philosophers, unlike those of the strategists, are not principally determined by differences in their objective assessments of what systems would work best for deterrence. Rather, what most divides philosophers on the issue of which nuclear policy should be adopted are basic assumptions of moral theory. In rough outline, the two principal positions are deontological and utilitarian. Deontologists are concerned with the nature of actions, including the nature of threatened actions. Utilitarians are concerned with likely outcomes of actions, as, of course, are strategists. Most philosophers who are inclined to defend the morality of nuclear deterrence through the threat of massive retaliation even against innocents are utilitarians, who share with strategists the view that the world with nuclear deterrence is likely to be better than the world without it. Nevertheless, one might argue, even on utilitarian grounds, that nuclear deterrence is immoral just because one thinks it will lead to worse disasters on the whole—as defined by the number of expected deaths that will result from the policy—than will nuclear disarmament, even if this must be unilateral. This is a position defended elsewhere by Douglas Lackey.

Deontologists generally are far less ready than utilitarians are to concede that we may threaten evil (the evil of destroying innocent civilians in the Soviet Union) in order that good may come. However, very few deontologists, if any, would insist that the only considerations that determine the morality of an action are abstract characteristics of the action. In particular, the likely results of an action may also be taken into account, and when these are grievous, they may override the prima facie stricture against an action of a certain kind. Hence a deontologist might suppose


8. There are other positions, of course, as represented by Christopher Morris’s view that in the state of nature that characterizes international politics notions of justice and right have no meaning, so that states may do what they must to survive.

that, in the case of nuclear deterrence, the good of the protection of Americans and others from various evil prospects finally outweighs deontological concern with the nature of the threat of killing millions of innocents, as Steven Lee concludes.

Discussion among philosophers often stops at the point of fundamental disagreement over moral principles, just as discussion among strategists often stops at the point of disagreement over hypothetical assertions about deterrence. But most moral theorists—and all utilitarians—also require consideration of hypothetical assertions to reach their conclusions, although they are typically even less adept at objective, causal argument than are strategists, who are themselves often quite casual with their social scientific claims. Even if one wishes to argue principally from deontological principles, one must have some confidence in one’s social scientific expectations to decide whether consequences might not in this instance be overriding. Only a deontologist who held the extraordinary position that consequences never matter could easily reach a conclusion on nuclear weapons without considering the quality of various outcomes. Alas, on this dreadful issue good causal arguments are desperately needed.

ALTERNATIVES TO MUTUAL ASSURED DESTRUCTION

As noted in the previous section, there are many critics of the present American deterrent policy, which emphasizes mutual assured destruction and which relies, in part, on nuclear weapons to deter conventional wars in areas such as Europe and Korea. Criticism, of course, comes from both philosophers and strategists. Let us take a closer look at the principal alternatives to the present policy: placing much greater emphasis on counterforce and defensive weaponry and “denuclearizing” international relations.

The just war tradition is not directly represented in this issue, although it is discussed extensively by Robert Tucker. And certainly, one of its central concerns, the threat of indiscriminate killing of innocents, is central

10. It is important to emphasize that although the United States has adopted a policy of mutual assured destruction, it still maintains a significant counterforce capability. It does not, however, have counterforce capability adequate to threaten the Soviet Union’s assured destruction capability or to “fight and prevail” in a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. Developing such capabilities is what the counterforce debate is all about.

to most of the philosophers' papers. Just war theorists are invariably disturbed by the policy of mutual assured destruction since it is predicated on the threat to kill massive numbers of innocent civilians. Some advocates of this tradition maintain that there is an alternative: a satisfactory deterrent posture can instead be built around counterforce and defensive weapons, which, so it is argued, can be used without killing large numbers of civilian innocents and certainly without the intention to kill innocents. Hence, as Paul Ramsey and others have argued, such weapons are permissible under the so-called principle of discrimination of the just war tradition insofar as they are used against military targets without indiscriminately killing noncombatants. 12 For example, it has been supposed that the cruise missile, which can be used discriminately because of its great accuracy, represents a moral advance over weapons aimed at cities. 13 Of course, the cruise missile could also be used against cities.

The support for counterforce and defensive weapons that some just war theorists draw from the principle of discrimination is openly rejected by many strategists. This position is based on two considerations. First, many strategists believe that these weapons are destabilizing. They produce crisis instability, so the argument goes, by threatening the Soviet Union's assured destruction capability. This gives Soviet leaders strong incentive in a crisis to launch their nuclear forces quickly, before they can be eliminated by our counterforce weapons. In effect, the Soviet Union is placed in what is sometimes referred to as a "use them or lose them" situation. Also, because these weapons are likely to make nuclear war seem less horrible to decision makers (the principal attraction, of course, to just war theorists), they will have the effect of making war more likely. Second, many strategists do not believe that it is possible to fight in a discriminating manner with nuclear weapons. The potential for escalation is so great, they believe, that it makes no sense to talk in terms of a limited nuclear war. The consequentialism of these strategists thus brings them, as it does many utilitarian philosophers, into opposition to this just war principle.

Nevertheless, not all strategists are opposed to pursuing a counterforce strategy. Some, like Colin Gray, feel that there are good moral as well as sound strategic reasons for doing so. The moral argument offered by these strategists is that of the just war tradition. The strategic rationale, on the other hand, is usually of three kinds. First, the case is often made that the Soviet Union is developing a formidable counterforce capability of its own and that the United States must move to check this development by deploying its own counterforce capability. Second, there are some who believe that the United States would gain significant political advantage

over the Soviet Union if it had a marked advantage in counterforce capabilities. In effect, proponents of this view answer yes to the question, Does nuclear superiority matter? Third, and related to the previous point, advocates of counterforce feel that, if the United States is going to rely on its strategic nuclear forces to deter conventional wars in places such as Europe and Korea, then it is necessary to have the capability to wage and to prevail in a nuclear war. This discussion points up quite clearly that there is no agreement among either philosophers or strategists on the question of the counterforce option. In fact, strategists and philosophers are found on both sides of the issue, making it difficult to generalize about the positions of the two communities.

The second alternative to mutual assured destruction calls for significantly deemphasizing our reliance on nuclear weapons and placing greater reliance on our conventional forces. In the strategists' vocabulary, this is referred to as a "finite deterrent." One only needs to maintain enough nuclear weapons to destroy a large fraction of the opponent's population. A key assumption underlying this school of thought is that nuclear weapons are only effective at deterring one's adversary from making a direct attack on one's homeland. Nuclear weapons are not capable of deterring attacks against one's allies in other areas of the world. In the strategist's jargon, the "extended deterrent value" of these weapons is minimal. Thus, one needs only a small number of nuclear weapons to deter a direct attack on the homeland.

It seems clear that virtually all of the philosophers represented in this issue favor substantial reductions of nuclear arms. This position does not enjoy widespread support among strategists, although there are a good number, Richard Ullman among them, who advocate this view. In general, most strategists believe that nuclear weapons have great deterrent value for which conventional forces cannot substitute. The issue takes its clearest form in the debate over whether NATO should adopt a "no first use" (NFU) policy. Ullman calls for adopting an NFU policy as part of his program for "denuclearizing" international politics. Josef Joffe and George Quester disagree. The case against NFU is built on the assumption that nuclear weapons, because they are so horrible, deter war in Europe. In other words, the best way to prevent war in Europe is to make both sides believe that any conflict there has some likelihood of escalating into a general thermonuclear war. Adopting an NFU policy, so the argument goes, has the effect of making Europe "safe" for a conventional war that would probably not involve direct attacks on the homelands of either superpower. War would be more likely to break out in a situation like this than it would be in one where both superpowers believed that it was very likely that a war in Europe would escalate to the nuclear level. Again, the issue is threatening evil that good may come or that greater evil may be avoided.14

14. Against Joffe's conclusion, Jeff McMahan and Arne Naess have argued that unilateral nuclear disarmament would provide the best protection of lives in at least the United
There is another dimension to the strategist’s case against moving to denuclearize international relations. Many, Robert Art included, feel that the dangers associated with nuclear war are so great that the superpowers have been forced to behave in an extremely cautious manner when dealing with each other. This caution, it is supposed, extends to minor conflicts in relatively remote areas of the globe. Basically, nuclear weapons have altered the way great powers behave toward each other. The clear implication is that relations between the United States and the Soviet Union would have been much different over the past forty years if there had been no nuclear weapons. McGeorge Bundy once referred to this effect of nuclear weapons as “existential deterrence.” Many strategists believe that this caution induced by nuclear weapons is a good thing and that efforts to denuclearize international relations would not serve the interests of world peace.

Of course, not all strategists agree with this line of argument. Robert McNamara, for example, believes that nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the superpowers have no deterrent value other than to deter an adversary from using nuclear weapons. Because any use of nuclear weapons might escalate to involve direct attacks on the superpowers, we cannot sensibly threaten their use for lesser purposes such as the defense of Western Europe. In effect, he interprets the caution that attends nuclear weapons to mean that it is highly unlikely that either side will ever use them, thus greatly diminishing their deterrent value. Critics of NFU typically disagree with this supposition.

Perhaps the starkest way to pose the issue of denuclearization is to suppose that nuclear weapons had never been invented and to ask what our world would be like without them. Many strategists are inclined to think that we would have had disastrous war with the Soviet Union. One suspects that most philosophers concerned with nuclear weapons and at least some strategists would prefer the counterfactual world in which there were no such weapons. If Robert Art and many of his fellow strategists are right, this preference wants examination. Consequentialists of either a limited or a broadly utilitarian persuasion might suppose that a hundred million dead in a conventional war with high probability would

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compare unfavorably to far more dead in a nuclear war with much lower probability. Deontologists have difficulty with moral conclusions drawn from such comparisons. But if the numbers are sufficiently stark, they must give even the staunchest deontologist pause.

OTHER ISSUES

There are two other broad issues associated with nuclear weapons that receive considerable attention in this issue: the impact of nuclear weapons on civic life and the matter of controlling military technology.

Sissela Bok and Richard Ullman argue that nuclear weapons are fundamentally incompatible with democratic government. Ullman is principally concerned with the fact that the ultimate decision to use nuclear weapons is placed in the hands of a small number of decision makers who would not have to consult the publics in whose name they would presume to act. Bok appears to be more concerned about the need for secrecy that surrounds nuclear weapons. She believes that this has a debilitating effect on the body politic and ultimately works to undermine democratic institutions.

As is often the case in the field of national security affairs, such effects may cut both ways. The system of control over nuclear weapons may have an adverse impact on democratic politics, but building substantially more powerful conventional forces as a substitute for our heavy reliance on nuclear weapons is likely to have even more corrosive effects on our democratic polity. If European history is any guide, it suggests that large standing armies are likely to be incompatible with democracy.\(^{18}\) While the secrecy attending nuclear forces may pose special problems, it is nevertheless true that military secrecy has permeated public life since long before the nuclear era. In fact, one could probably make a convincing case that among states in the West there is now less secrecy about national security matters than there has been at any time in modern history.

Second, there is the matter of arms control or controlling military technology. Nuclear weapons and especially the systems we develop for delivering them against an opponent depend very heavily on the constant flow of new technologies. It is widely recognized that military technology is highly dynamic. More specifically, it is important to note that there is a feeling among many strategists that we are on the threshold of a revolution of sorts in the realm of nuclear technology. We can expect, it is widely supposed, great increases in missile accuracy and the development of effective strategic defensive systems. Gray and Ullman, who have quite different views on nuclear strategy, seem to agree that significant changes in the nuclear inventories are in the offing.

It would be beneficial if the superpowers were to control the development of military technology so that only those systems that enhanced

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deterrence were developed. Unfortunately, directing or restraining technological developments before they are transformed into military capability is a very difficult task. As Karl Lautenschläger argues, it is not a simple matter to separate military from nonmilitary technologies, and sometimes technologies that appear to be of a nonmilitary nature turn out to have significant military capability. Other times, technologies serve useful non-military purposes as well as military ones. Thus, the society at large would pay a heavy price if the development of such technologies was thwarted. Finally, there is usually considerable disagreement among strategists over the desirability of various military technologies. Gray and Ullman, for example, would surely disagree about the desirability of almost all the new technologies that they see coming.

Lautenschläger argues that controlling military technology may do more harm than good. One could accept the logic of this argument as it applies to controlling technology at the early stages of the development process and still see some hope for arms control. It might be argued, for example, that the prospects for control are much better if one intervenes at the testing stage rather than at the level of basic research. This approach has been emphasized over the past fifteen years in arms control negotiations between the superpowers. Furthermore, the kinds of arms control that Ullman recommends are not terribly difficult to effect, although as he admits the payoffs from arms control measures that are easy to achieve are not particularly great. Whatever approach we take, arms control will still be plagued by questions about “good” and “bad” weapons.

Perhaps the best way to control military developments would be to influence the political forces that drive the arms race. If, as Bok believes, the postwar arms race is substantially a consequence of failed political will, then improving American-Soviet relations will have more impact on slowing down arms developments than direct efforts at controlling military technology will. It is an assumption of many in both the philosophical and strategic communities that the competition between the superpowers is largely a matter of ideological differences and that these differences can be ameliorated. Others, however, believe that the conflict grows out of geopolitical considerations that are independent of ideological differences. This view is certainly consistent with the realist interpretation of international relations so common to strategists. If this view is at least partly correct, direct efforts at arms control may hold more promise than more general efforts to alter significantly the general tenor of relations between the superpowers. This would be especially true if both sides were convinced that it served their economic interests to achieve controls. In sum, the policy we recommend depends on what we consider to be the motor that drives the competition between the great powers. And here there is little agreement.