The USSR and the Arms Race

Walter C. Clemens, Jr.

As Moscow and Washington move toward a second round of SALT, analysts in both capitals raise serious questions—not only about the accords concluded in 1972, but, with still greater concern, about the agreements that will be considered in the years ahead. Communists may well ask: If revolution is the stepchild of war, should we welcome conditions that make international stability more likely? Western skeptics, for their part, ask whether Soviet leaders will not exploit a nuclear stalemate to advance the Communist cause through subnuclear diplomacy or nonmilitary means in which the West is generally at a disadvantage. Some U.S. strategists, for example, contend that there is a basic asymmetry which turns the SALT agreements to Moscow’s favor. Since Moscow’s objectives are unlimited, they contend, they may be effectively pursued as long as the USSR enjoys at least rough equality with the United States. For America to deter Soviet probes, overwhelming superiority is needed, both in strategic and other arms.

I will not try to settle here whether communism is best advanced by the principle that “things must get worse before they get better.” Lenin’s works support not only this idea but also the notion that socialism can be radiated by means of peaceful competition. I will try rather to respond to Western arguments that the SALT agreements are undesirable or likely to be short-lived because Soviet aims are unlimited and must be contained by overwhelming military power. I will develop six basic propositions, based not upon citations from Communist classics but on the historical record of Soviet foreign policy.

Proposition I: Despite the clash of conflicting interest groups within the USSR, Soviet foreign policy,

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eral, generally been defensive in character, except (a) in the Bolsheviks' efforts to consolidate their rule in the border republics that were formerly part of the czarist empire (as in the Caucasus), and (b) when the USSR has returned the blow of an attacker. The following cases illustrate this proposition:

1. Even in the years of War Communism (1918-1921) the Soviet leaders put a higher premium on the security of their regime and on raison d'état than on revolution abroad, a point established as early as 1918 in the implementation of Lenin's policy rather than Trotsky's (or Bukharin's) in negotiating with Germany at Brest-Litovsk.

2. The Red Army's drive toward the gates of Warsaw in 1920 came after the scales had been tilted in a war initiated by Poland.

3. Soviet aggression against the Baltic countries, eastern Poland and Finland in 1939-40 was consonant with Communist ideology and with regaining territories of the czarist empire, but it was motivated primarily by the imperatives of Soviet security, given the imminence of a major war.

4. Soviet efforts after World War II to remain in control or to seize territories in Eastern Europe, the Near and Middle East (Turkey and Iran) and the Far East followed in the wake of a war not initiated by Russia but which Moscow utilized to strengthen and consolidate its sphere of influence or control, particularly along the periphery. Many of these areas had belonged to the czarist empire; most of them were important to Soviet security; some were necessary to maintain Soviet occupation forces in defeated Germany and Austria. Soviet behavior in Azerbaijan deviated most sharply from these defensive standards (though it could be rationalized by references to the 1921 Soviet-Iranian Treaty; to Caucasian oil interests; or to the right of the Azerbaijani people to national self-determination). The Soviet Union, of course, was not the only member of the wartime coalition to use force to reestablish her empire (cf. Indochina, Taiwan, Malaya) or to set up friendly governments (cf. Italy, Greece). In any case, a policy that seeks to hold the spoils of victory from a war commenced by another party is still consonant with a basically defensive orientation.

5. Moscow's role in fomenting the Korean War in 1950 has not been established, though Soviet equipment was used by the North Koreans. (There is also an argument that South Korea initiated the war, though this does not seem plausible or persuasive to me.)

6. The use of Soviet armed forces to intervene in the internal politics of Eastern Europe (e.g., 1953, 1956 and 1968) have contradicted all standards of national self-determination, even as expressed on occasion by Soviet leaders. Nevertheless, these interventions have represented efforts to maintain Soviet interests rather than expand them by force. These interests had more to do with Soviet security (internal as well as external) than with ideology, though an East European defection from the socialist camp would surely have been a serious blow to the image of Communist unity.

7. Soviet pressures on Western Europe since World War II have contributed significantly to East-West tensions and the arms race. But the entire process of escalating tensions and demands in the early cold war years must be seen as one of interaction, in which each side saw its actions as provoked by hostile initiatives and bad faith by the other. The most belligerent Soviet pressures occurred in 1958-62, when Moscow's bargaining advantages were at a temporary peak, due in part to talk of a missile gap. These and other pressures were also a reflection of weakness, however, as seen by the perceived need to construct the Berlin Wall in 1961.

Some Soviet initiatives may also have been aimed at obtaining a negotiated settlement. Thus Khrushchev's hard-line address of November 10, 1958, on the German problem was preceded by a second, rather conciliatory version of the Rapacki Plan for East Central Europe on November 4. It also came in the wake of less belligerent Soviet initiatives on which
Secretary of State Dulles had thrown cold water. In any event, Soviet probes stopped far short of war when confronted by Western firmness, from the 1948 Berlin blockade to Khrushchev’s quasi-ultimatum of 1958-61.

8. Advanced Soviet military equipment has been deployed abroad, manned sometimes by Soviet personnel, as in Cuba, North Vietnam and Egypt. These and other arms shipments have been used as a means of securing political influence, an approach used also by Western governments (and by Peking). The Cuban missile buildup aimed primarily at redressing the global balance of power, while the impetus for sending military personnel and antiaircraft missiles to Vietnam and Egypt was to protect those countries from air attacks by the United States and Israel. In each case, Soviet leaders could cite some provocation by the West, beginning in 1954-55 with the Dulles policy of closing the circle around Russia by means of the Baghdad Pact, and continuing through air strikes deep in friendly territory that raised questions (even in Eastern Europe) about Moscow’s reliability as an ally. When compelled by circumstances to station Soviet troops in combat zones abroad, Moscow has generally sought to minimize news of their activities, sometimes withdrawing them to avoid escalation.*

Proposition III: The historical record suggests that most Soviet actions threatening to world peace have resulted from a perceived sense of military inferiority rather than parity or superiority on the part of the Soviet Union.

This proposition is implicit in many of the cases cited to illustrate proposition II: weakness vis-à-vis Hitler’s Drang nach Osten seemingly countenanced by Britain and France; determination not to suffer such an attack again after World War II; determination to obtain resources from the defeated countries to rebuild the Soviet economy. Pressures to alter the status of Berlin came in part from the fact that the city was, as Khrushchev put it, a bone in his throat, unsettling to the status quo in Eastern Europe. The Soviet decisions to resume nuclear testing in 1961 (after a three-year moratorium) and to attempt a quick-fix in Cuba were probably motivated primarily by a concern to compensate for the rapid buildup of Minuteman and Polaris missiles begun under the Kennedy-McNamara Administration (whose spokesmen sometimes hinted that they would consider a counterforce preemptive strike). Soviet weaknesses at this time were known not only through the U-2 flights and later satellite reconnaissance, but also through the Penkovsky revelations. The domestic repercussions of this whole situation meant that Khrushchev felt compelled to take strong positions in foreign policy after the revelation that Eisenhower had let him down by taking responsibility for the Powers U-2 flight in 1960.

It is not clear from the historical record to what extent the USSR would use a position of military superiority to wage an aggressive war or diplomatic campaign. This is so first of all because the Soviet Union has generally been inferior to the Western nations in strategic weaponry, even though Soviet and East European conventional forces have long been superior in some respects in the European theatre. Only toward the end of the 1960's did the Soviet Union establish herself as the rough equal of the United States in strategic weapons. What is clear is that the Soviet leaders have often utilized their local advantages to gain or to maintain control in areas along the Soviet periphery (in 1918-21, 1939-41, after World War II, and against East European revolts), i.e., in conditions where the Kremlin believed it could operate without interference from the superior strategic forces of a distant foe. It also appears that Khrushchev attempted to exploit the alleged "bomber gap" and "missile gap" to buttress Soviet foreign policy, even though these gaps proved to be largely mythical. On the other hand, Khrushchev’s policies were much less aggressive than those deemed feasible by Mao Tse-tung, who thought that the first sputnik and Soviet ICBM test in 1957 meant that the east wind could actively prevail over the West.

A general Soviet strategic superiority over the United States is hardly foreseeable in the 1970's. Even if a nominal superiority existed in some domains, it could hardly assure the USSR that the United States would be unable to respond vigorously to a Soviet first-strike. To the extent that the Soviet leaders retain any belief that communism is the eventual wave of the future, this conviction would also discourage them from active risk-taking, since time would be presumed to work for their cause.

Proposition IV: Soviet proposals on arms control have generally been consonant with the military-strategic interests of the Soviet Union. When the USSR has been weak in some respects, she has proposed measures that would tend to redress the balance to her favor. When Moscow has been strong in some domains, the Soviet leaders have advocated measures that would tend to perpetuate that advantage.

This kind of behavior is typical of the realpolitik

* Immediately after the outbreak of the Suez war in 1956, Soviet pilots flew their planes out of Egypt and away from the combat zone. See J. M. Mackintosh, Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy (New York, 1962), p. 186. Soviet caution was also reflected in the statement attributed to Stalin, explaining why he withdrew Soviet advisors from Korea: "It’s too dangerous to keep our advisors there. They might be taken prisoner. We don’t want there to be evidence for accusing us of taking part in this business. It’s Kim II-sung’s affair" (Khrushchev Remembers, Boston, 1970).
approach characteristic of the traditional nation-state. It implies that ideological or cultural factors are less important than material ones in shaping Soviet policy. To that extent, it also implies that if the material environment offers incentives to both sides to freeze the arms race or to reduce force levels, some agreement may be struck, regardless of the parties' divergent worldviews. Soviet arms control proposals have often reflected the premises of Communist ideology, but ideology has over time been adapted to reflect the imperatives of the military and economic conditions facing the Soviet State.

The major reasons why further-reaching accords have not been achieved may be catalogued as "objective" (e.g., great asymmetries in the force structures of the superpowers) and as "voluntarist" (cf. the long history of mutual distrust and lack of deep commitment to negotiated settlements on the part of the elites in either country). The style and substance of some Soviet arms control proposals have been conducive to agreement in the sense that they balanced the interests of the negotiating parties. Other proposals had little chance of acceptance because they would favor Soviet interests while prejudicing those of the other side. Thus, the criterion of "sincerity" is not very illuminating, since both kinds of measures could be "sincerely" welcomed by the Kremlin.

Proposition V: As Soviet and U.S. force structures have become more symmetrical, it has become more feasible for Moscow and Washington to put forward arms control proposals that would take into account the needs of one another. Since the mid-1950's, each superpower has offered a number of arms control schemes that were basically negotiable. Even though objective conditions favored such accords, however, political conditions in Moscow or in Washington (or in their alliance systems) often did not. The superpowers have often been out of phase. When one side has been ready for an accord, the other was not. Here the question of lag time has often been crucial. The closer the two sides move to parity, the more conducive the material environment to an agreement—assuming some technological breakthrough is not expected that would restore major advantages to one of the parties. The more that military-technical factors assure the second-strike deterrence systems of each party, the greater are the material incentives for a political commitment to containing the arms race through explicit or tacit agreement.

Proposition VI: The USSR and the Western powers have often treated the problem of arms control as an issue in a zero-sum competition between them, thereby undermining the elements of mutual trust and good will.

A. The Western powers, led by the United States,
sistencies could be explained by changes in the objective military balance in the interval between the Western initiative and Soviet response, but the Kremlin could hardly fail to ask whether such behavior did not confirm Lenin's original skepticism about the willingness of capitalist regimes to agree to meaningful limitations on armaments. (Such doubts would be reinforced by White House statements on the Indochina war, which produced a credibility gap at home as well as abroad, leading Prime Minister Harold Wilson as well as Premier Kosygin in 1967 to question the good faith of the American President.)

2. American depictions of the Communist threat have often been exaggerated, sometimes from fear, sometimes from lack of accurate information, but sometimes in order to justify larger defense budgets or military intervention abroad. This kind of propaganda has been used to magnify the image of a monolithic Communist movement threatening many outposts of the free world and thus to justify corresponding actions by the West to support the cause of freedom in such diverse places as Greece and Turkey (1947), Lebanon (1958), the Dominican Republic (1965) and—for over a decade—South Vietnam.

With respect to the East-West arms race, the United States has often magnified the military threat posed by the USSR. Much of this problem may be traced to Soviet secrecy, which creates real uncertainties about Soviet intentions as well as capabilities; to Russia's long-standing sense of inferiority and actual weapons inferiority vis-à-vis the United States—which made it expedient for Moscow to mask its real weaknesses; and—not least—to Khrushchev's boasts, which naturally excited Western concerns about a possible gap in bombers, missiles and ABM systems.

Given these problems, the impression remains that the Pentagon has often produced scare analyses on the eve of congressional action on defense appropriations. The studies of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (based primarily on official U.S. data) suggest that—at the very moment in the early 1970's when the Nixon Administration warned about being overtaken and surpassed by the USSR—the United States had a commanding lead over Russia (approximately 2:1 in many cases) in:

-Numbers of nuclear tests carried out both before and after the Moscow Treaty;
-Deliverable nuclear and thermonuclear warheads;
-Numbers of strategic delivery vehicles;
-Available megatonnage;
-Quality of strategic delivery vehicles (hardening, accuracy, multiple warheads, etc.);
-Numbers and quality of ships at sea and sea bases;

-Arms shipments to other countries;
-Defense spending.

To be sure, some asymmetries in the strategic and conventional balance favored the USSR, but these were generally more than compensated by Western advantages. Given the fact of the SALT negotiations, it seemed inappropriate for Washington to belabor Soviet deployment of FOBS (fractional orbital bombardment systems) or SS-9 missiles (large, liquid fueled), which Washington had already considered and opted not to deploy or to discontinue because more modern and efficient systems were available. Though the USSR was "gaining" in some respects on the Western powers in the early 1970's, the overall balance of material power—technological and economic as well as military—seemed likely to favor the West for at least the decade, perhaps to a greater extent than in the 1960's if nonmilitary aspects were considered.

3. Compounding the first two factors is a third: the self-righteousness and intolerance of a Puritan outlook that feels justice and goodness are its virtual monopoly. This was the view which could lead to the self-righteous contention that armed intervention in Soviet Russia in 1918 was merely aimed at protecting depots of Western arms or at inhibiting Japanese aggression; to treatment of the Soviet government as immoral and as temporary for over a decade, responding to its overtures regarding the Washington Naval Conference by asserting that the United States would look after the interests of the Russian people; to the later contention that America should retain her atomic monopoly as the custodian for all mankind until Washington was satisfied that international controls of atomic energy had become effective; and—passing over other such incidents to one in 1971—to the response of two U.S. officials to the Soviet draft treaty on cooperation on the moon: "There's not one thing of any importance in it." "The Russians have never wanted to be held responsible for anything and they are trying to fuzz the thing [the negotiations] in Geneva."

Even if these officials were partially correct in matters of detail, it was significant that they could be so self-righteous (considering that the U.S. draft space treaty in 1966 was much narrower than the Soviet draft, which ultimately provided more of the content for the 1967 treaty) or that they could be so oblivious of the larger motives that may have inspired the 1971 Soviet proposal (which came on the heels of Soviet concessions on the issues of a separate treaty for biological weapons and MBFR negotiations).

4. American self-righteousness also colored a new tack in U.S. policy in 1970-71, the assertion of "understandings" with various parties, though the text was never published and some of the parties never admitted the accord. One set of understandings per-
tained to Indochina, where the Nixon Administration sought to justify stepped-up bombings of North Vietnam in May and November, 1970, on the grounds that aerial reconnaissance was permitted under the 1968 understanding by which U.S. bombings of the north were halted. Since Hanoi had attacked U.S. reconnaissance planes, these "protective reaction" strikes were justified. Hanoi, for its part, seems to have viewed the 1968 understanding as being conditional on an end to all "acts of war" and not just to "acts involving the use of force"—the U.S. formulation.

Cairo and Moscow were also accused in 1970 of violating the cease-fire which the United States helped to negotiate between Egypt and Israel. The terms of this understanding were allegedly violated by Egypt and the USSR by their deployment of new antiaircraft missiles within the cease-fire zone. Egyptian diplomats, however, contended that the character of the understanding evolved over time, culminating in a U.S. demand just twenty-four hours before the cease-fire was to commence that the accord prohibit any movement of weapons already within the cease-fire zone. Asked why the United States did not pose this condition earlier, a State Department official is said to have replied: "Because we knew you would not accept it then." (Another interpretation credits a last-minute Israeli stipulation.) Egyptian sources hold that Cairo refused to endorse this last-minute condition. (They also claim not to have known of U.S. promises of more aid to Israel in case the understanding broke down, a factor that gave Tel Aviv a major incentive to claim violations.) As for Moscow, no evidence has been made public concerning Soviet acceptance of the Middle East cease-fire. Nevertheless, Hans Morgenthau's comment is typical of most in the American press at the time: He accused Moscow of "agreeing to a ceasefire for the Middle East and violating the agreement at the very moment of its coming into operation."

A third "understanding" concerned Cuba, where the Nixon Administration challenged Soviet naval movements on the basis of President Kennedy's statement in 1962 that peace would be assured only "if all offensive missiles are removed from Cuba and kept out of the Hemisphere in the future." A September, 1970, statement from the White House warned against servicing Soviet submarines from a base in Cuba, but this was broadened by the President on January 4, 1971, as he declared on television: "Now, in the event that nuclear submarines were serviced either in Cuba or from Cuba, that would be a violation of the understanding." The U.S. position, as George Quester has pointed out, puts somewhat self-serving interpretation on the 1962 understanding, broadening it from "offensive missiles" (presumed emphasis on land-based missiles) to "nuclear submarines" (which might be nuclear-powered without carrying nuclear weapons) and their tenders. Thus the Administration has redefined an already vague understanding, one which Moscow acknowledged only obliquely in 1970 as in 1962. The U.S. position—apart from legalities—also runs counter to Washington's expressed confidence in the principle of stabilized deterrence, a condition increasingly dependent upon sea-based missiles in the age of MIRV. Here, as in the other alleged understandings, the United States seemed to presume that her interpretation (adjusted ad hoc to fit her needs) should be accepted by others.

B. The Soviet Union, unfortunately, has also contributed to the climate of suspicion and difficulty that complicates efforts to contain the arms race.

1. Even after world revolution has ceased to be an urgent goal for the Kremlin, the rhetoric of May 1 and November 7 ceremonies, the themes of Soviet Communist programs, the shrill rhetoric of May 1 and November 7 ceremonies, the shrill rhetoric of Radio Moscow vs. Radios Peking and Tirana in the Third World, the hawkish statements of Soviet military leaders and some politicians—all these aspects of Soviet declaratory policy make Western statesmen ponder the ultimate objectives of the adversary. From 1917 to the present, Soviet ideological pronouncements have generated a self-fulfilling prophecy: predicting "capitalist" intervention and promising the victory of socialism, these statements have increased the probability of Western hostility to the Soviet regime.

2. The Soviet approach to arms control has typically been more "political" and less technical than that of the West. To be sure, both sides have on occasion inserted "jokers" in their disarmament schemes, i.e., proposals that would greatly favor their own interests if not rejected by the other party. But Soviet leaders have generally looked beyond the narrow issues under negotiation to consider how arms control talks may affect the broader aims of Soviet foreign and domestic policy. It was the wider issues at stake that led Lenin to denounce disarmament talks as counterrevolutionary before he came to power, and later to view them as useful for manipulating contradictions between the Western governments and their people, between one Western government and another and between factions within Western elites that took a hostile or a conciliatory view toward relations with the Soviet government.

Given the political climate of the early 1920's or, say, the cold war tensions of the late 1940's, such tactics were not so surprising, nor did they greatly heighten international tensions per se. That the West was less alert to the possibility of using disarmament talks in this way is a commen-
tary on the greater commitment and skill of the Bolsheviks in exploiting the new and open diplomacy which Lenin (and Wilson) helped to introduce.

To use arms control negotiations for ulterior motives—even aggressive motives—at a time when peace seems to depend upon a balance of terror or an entente between superpowers—is highly deleterious for international stability. In Lenin’s time there was little good faith and little prospect of East-West arms controls. The situation then was quite different from that which has prevailed since the mid-1950’s, when each superpower has tried to persuade the other of its fundamental devotion to peace and strategic stability. Despite the fragile character of the new world situation, Moscow has continued to use arms control as part of a general political offensive. Thus Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov privately conveyed Moscow’s acceptance of the Anglo-French memorandum as the basis for negotiations on force levels in 1954 just prior to the critical vote in the French Assembly on the European Defense Community. The détente that Moscow fostered in 1955, partly through arms control concessions, helped to camouflage the beginning of Soviet penetration of Egypt and the Middle East. Soviet proposals in the 1950’s and 1960’s seemed calculated to put pressure on West Germany (constraints on deployment of tactical nuclear or multilateral nuclear sharing) and to appeal to French separatism (e.g., by Moscow’s 1960 proposal to eliminate all strategic delivery vehicles in the first stage of general disarmament).

But much higher stakes were involved in 1962, as the Soviet Union embarked on her plan to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba. In July a World Congress for General Disarmament and Peace was held in Moscow and non-Communist Americans were allowed to speak their minds in the Kremlin. In September, weeks before the missile deployment would have been complete, Khrushchev himself made potentially important concessions in the Soviet posture on a nuclear test ban. Khrushchev was joined by Gromyko and Ambassador Dobrynin in affirmations that no offensive weapons were being emplaced in Cuba. The test ban and other arms control moves were apparently part of a larger strategy aimed at inducing Washington to engage in wishful thinking—as evidence increase of an arms buildup in Cuba. It is also conceivable that Khrushchev meant to use concessions on arms control as a quid pro quo for Kennedy’s tolerating a major breach in the Monroe Doctrine.

A second matter of great importance. It is conceivable that the Kremlin exploited the “Spirit of Moscow” following the 1963 test ban treaty to restrain an American arms program while laying the groundwork for a renewed Soviet effort to reach parity or overtake the United States. Given the lead time required to move from the drawing board and test site to mass production, the missile program which brought the USSR toward parity with the United States by the end of the 1960’s must have commenced either in the last year of Khrushchev’s reign (1963-64) or shortly thereafter. Official Soviet budget figures show defense spending as follows (in $ millions and at 1960 exchange rates):

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These figures do not necessarily confirm or refute the hypothesis, since the official data may exclude covert spending for some (or all) years. It might also be that the years 1964-1966 showed relatively low expenditures because of an emphasis at that time on R & D, assembly line production and associated costs coming only in the late 1960’s.

A third serious case concerns the Soviet position on arms control just prior to the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia. As the Nonproliferation Treaty was signed in Moscow, Washington, and London, on July 1, 1968, the USSR announced a renewed and expanded Soviet commitment to a nine-point program of arms control. Plans to commence strategic arms talks were also agreed to by Washington and Moscow. On August 19—as Soviet planes and armies were moving toward Czechoslovakia—Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin sent a handwritten invitation to President Johnson to visit the Soviet Union. Moscow played effectively on the President’s emotions, and he is reported to have seriously considered the trip even after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. His trip, as well as the onset of SALT, was eventually cancelled, SALT being delayed by over a year.

The reasons why such behavior is dangerous to the success of arms control negotiations are obvious. Soviet negotiating behavior at SALT is consistent with many explanations, one of them being that Moscow is stalling to gain time while the Soviet defense program attempts to catch up with the United States in numbers of land-based and sea-based missiles, in silo hardening and in multiple warhead technology. As William Welch has demonstrated in American Images of Soviet Foreign Policies, Soviet treaty observance has been much more faithful than portrayed in some Western studies, but Moscow’s reckless abuse of arms control concessions at crucial moments, as in 1962 and 1968, suggests that the Kremlin’s per-
exception of its self-interest may be quite different from the common cause sometimes supposed in the West. Though arms control accords are held to depend upon mutual interest for their durability, even the act of entering into the negotiating process requires a modicum of trust on each side.

Such trust has hardly been earned by Moscow even in its dealings with putative allies. Thus Peking has complained about the continuation under the Soviet regime of unequal treaties imposed on China in czarist days. Nor was Stalin beneath imposing his own unequal treaty arrangements on Communist China, arrangements which were annulled in 1954. Peking has also declared (in the Sino-Soviet polemics of 1963) that the USSR did not stand by China in the Taiwan Straits crises sometimes supposed in the common cause. Nor did Moscow help China in the Taiwan Straits crises. Accusations by the USSR of unilaterally abrogating in 1959 the treaty on a new defense technology concluded in 1957. Though the evidence is not conclusive, it can be argued that Moscow played a double game with China in the late 1950's, extending limited nuclear assistance (perhaps stalling on delivery) while working simultaneously for a nuclear test ban with the Western governments. If the test ban could be achieved, it might serve as a pretext for discontinuing nuclear assistance to China. Though the test ban treaty was not signed until 1963, Moscow broke off aid to China in 1959-1960 as a result of a general deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations. The inconsistent and vacillating character of Soviet policy may also have been the result of Khrushchev's famous "subjectivism," reflected in this case by a determination to win Chinese support at the November, 1957, Communist meeting in Moscow (if necessary by a "new technology" treaty), deciding later how to implement such commitments to Peking.

The experiences of Moscow's Warsaw Pact allies have been no more encouraging. Already in 1956 the Soviet armies showed that they could virtually withdraw from Hungary only to return suddenly and with great force. The preparations for the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 seem to have been still more elaborate and calculated. The attack did not come when political tensions were high in mid-summer. It came, rather, after the accords of the Ciemna Conference had been endorsed by the multilateral Bratislava Conference, resulting in a widespread sense of relief in Czechoslovakia (and also in Western Europe, where vacations in August are de rigueur for many government leaders as well as for the public). This was the moment—orchestrated with plans for SALT and a Johnson visit to Moscow—that Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces descended, spearheaded by surprise takeovers of airports in Prague and other Czechoslovak cities.

Conclusions: If either superpower treats the East-West competition in arms as a race it can "win," the prospects for viable arms controls are low. The chance that either superpower could in fact "win" this competition in some meaningful sense is also low. Far more likely (unless war comes), deterrence will simply be more costly if competition is accelerated on both sides. Fortunately this point seems to have been assimilated by key leaders both in Moscow and in Washington. While the 1972 SALT accords do not satisfy either extreme nationalists or advocates of disarmament, they constitute a hopeful building block from which more progress can be achieved in limiting the arms race.

Both the U.S. and the Soviet governments seem to be groping toward acceptance of the basic premises of what may be called a "modernist" conception of arms control. First, they have come to appreciate in practice as well as in theory the proposition that adversaries may have overlapping interests that make it rational for them to collaborate in certain domains—above all, in curbing the arms race and the threat of war. Second, the 1972 SALT agreements and the approach to SALT II show recognition of the principle that preventive arms control is more feasible than corrective therapy after arms deployments have occurred. Third, the compromise agreements reached in SALT (and also in the Vietnam peace talks) imply a recognition that power connotes responsibility and that risks for peace may have to be initiated by the side that enjoys marginal advantages. Fourth, the sober approach to SALT taken by both sides suggests a willingness to base military (and other) policies upon a firm appreciation of long-term consequences and costs, and not just upon momentary gains that may result from a quick fix or technological breakthrough a few years before it can be matched by the other side.

Perhaps the most serious lack in the approach of Moscow and Washington is a fifth principle, which we may call a sense of noblesse oblige, a conviction that the dignity and purpose of statesmanship lie in creating a free and prosperous world community and not mainly in piling up the means of national security as traditionally conceived. Whether difficulties among the key conditions needed for arms control accords become insurmountable will hinge on the underlying values of the U.S. and Soviet governments. Will they act in accord with the seriousness of the strategic challenge on the basis of foresight? Or, waiting for some crisis to galvanize them, will they permit favorable moments to slide by? On these points the record is not so sanguine: Progress has been made in ameliorating the East-West arms race, but this progress has been eclipsed by the cost and destructiveness of the arsenals accumulated by the superpowers, their allies and their rivals.