

There is a clear issue between “war fighters” and those who would stabilize the strategic balance

SALT and Carter's Dilemma

Title by C. Stalder

Gary L. Guertner

SALT, the strategic arms limitation talks between the United States and the Soviet Union, has been formally in progress since 1969, spanning the administrations of three American presidents. The often understated emphasis has been on maintaining strategic stability through quantitative limits and qualitative shaping of forces, present and future, and through formally agreed-upon ceilings rather than on the reduction of existing systems or inventories.* (The major ceilings and sublimits proposed for SALT II will limit each side to no more than 2,250 strategic nuclear delivery vehicles; a 1,320 sublimit on MIRVed launchers [land-based ICBMs, submarine-launched missiles, and airplanes equipped for long-range cruise missiles]; within the 1,320 MIRV limit, a 1,200 sublimit on launchers of MIRVed ICBMs and SLBMs; and within the 1,200 sublimit, an 820 sublimit on launchers of MIRVed ICBMs.)

The balanced ceiling approach, and its complex array of limits and sublimits, grew out of the Senate ratification of SALT I and its provision for unequal ceilings on ICBM and SLBM forces. The principle of equivalence set forth in the Jackson Amendment to the Interim Offensive Agreement stated that future treaties would “not limit the United States to levels of intercontinental strategic forces inferior to the limits provided for the Soviet Union.” The Senate made it clear that domestic political processes require at least the appearance of numerical balance in the nuclear arms bargaining process. However, as the acrimonious debate over an incomplete SALT II demonstrates, symmetrical ceilings and sublimits have not solved the problem of qualitative variations in Soviet and American systems allowed under the agreement.

While there are superficial similarities in the structures of the Soviet and American nuclear triads (ICBMs, SLBMs, and strategic bombers), the respective weapons and delivery systems within each triad have

evolved with major asymmetries due both to strategic design and to levels of technology available. U.S. forces have emphasized qualitative improvements primarily in the areas of multiple warheads (MIRV and soon MARV), miniaturization of components, penetration aids, superior accuracy, cruise missile technology, quieter and therefore less vulnerable submarines, and the like.

Soviet forces have made rapid quantitative advances during the past decade, emphasizing larger missiles with greater throw-weight and greater yield or megatonnage for their warheads. The Soviets, lacking the technology available in the United States, made a virtue of necessity in developing systems that are as much a product of technological capability as strategic design. What constitutes “essential equivalence” between forces of such diverse characteristics has become a major focal point in the SALT II debate, and this, more than any other single factor, could result in Senate rejection of the treaty.

Are there critical asymmetries threatening to the stability of nuclear deterrence? Critics of SALT II say yes—with prolific arguments, first-strike scenarios, and comparative box scores revealing inferior and vulnerable U.S. nuclear forces. Supporters of SALT II make equally compelling arguments, garnering statistics showing U.S. superiority in numbers and accuracy of warheads. The attentive public, even experts, and certainly Congress are caught up in the confusing and contradictory claims.

Official U.S. strategic doctrine first dealt with the problem by adding, in the spirit of the Jackson Amendment, the concept of “essential equivalence” to the U.S. criteria for strategic stability in 1974. A few years later Secretary of Defense Harold Brown expanded the concept:

By essential equivalence, I mean a condition such that any advantages in force characteristics enjoyed by the

GARY L. GUERTNER, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, California State University, Fullerton, is a member of the American Committee on East-West Accord.

*The Soviet Union will have to dismantle about 250 launch vehicles to get below proposed SALT II ceilings.

Soviets are offset by other U.S. advantages. Although we must avoid a resort to one-for-one matching of individual indices of capability, our strategic nuclear forces must not be, and must not seem to be, inferior in performance to the capabilities of the Soviet Union. Essential equivalence...helps to insure that political perceptions are in accord with the military realities, and it minimizes the probability that opposing strategic forces will be used to seek any diplomatic advantage over us.

In Brown's second annual report he rejects in more specific terms a definition of essential equivalence based on making U.S. capabilities comparable to those of the Soviet Union in each of several static measures such as numbers of delivery systems, throw-weight, and equivalent megatonnage. "A more reasonable interpretation," he argues, "demands that judgments be made and would require us to be ahead by some measures if behind in others....[S]ince precise equality is impossible to define when the forces of the two sides differ in so many respects, we have adopted the principle of essential equivalence as a surrogate for equality."

"Essential equivalence" is the most recent attempt to answer the question, "How much is enough?" It is the element of U.S. strategic doctrine most susceptible to perceptual/political differences and debate. This article will examine the concept as it relates to the strategic balance, the requirements for strategic stability, and the domestic opposition to SALT II.

THE STRATEGIC BALANCE

Any assessment of the strategic balance is partly a subjective comparison. It cannot easily be reduced to static, quantitative comparisons. Static variables such as numbers of launch vehicles, yield, throw-weight, and accuracy must be interposed with dynamic variables such as reliability, readiness, survivability of weapons and command and control systems, geography, allies, political objectives, and conditions under which nuclear weapons would be put to use. Moreover, our knowledge of both static and dynamic variables remains limited and speculative, since neither experiment nor experience has confirmed the validity of strategic doctrine. Predictions concerning performance of weapons systems under actual combat conditions are derived from extrapolations of data on single components under test conditions. The United States has never exploded a nuclear warhead at the end of a missile flight, has never fired from an operational silo, and has never tested large numbers of missiles in close coordination.

These gaps in our strategic knowledge add to the uncertainties of theory and, therefore, to the stability of deterrence. Regrettably for arms limitationists, these ambiguities also promote force planning based on worst-case assessments of enemy capabilities. Worst-case analysis, in turn, fosters that predominant emphasis on numerical and technical fine-tuning of the strategic balance as a requirement of strategic stability found in so much of the strategic literature published in the

United States. These arguments assume that the nuclear balance is indeed "delicate," and that slight shifts have major military and political significance.

Nearly all critics of SALT II base their arguments on the "delicate balance" model. Their arguments are assailable on at least three grounds. (1) Given their own assumptions on the need for balance, they compare force variables selectively. (2) Assessments based on a numbers approach obscure the more critical question of the overall ability of systems to perform assigned missions. And (3) neglect of a missions approach to nuclear force planning leads us away from the theoretical assumption on which nuclear deterrence and strategic stability were originally conceived—that nuclear weapons are for deterring wars, not fighting them.

Comparing Strategic Variables: No aspect of the SALT II debate is more impoverished or misleading than the comparative "box scores" (found in both popular and academic media) of isolated strategic variables carefully selected to show that the U.S. (a) is behind the Soviet Union in nuclear capabilities, or (b) is ahead of the Soviet Union in nuclear capabilities. It is impossible to assess the strategic balance by isolating single variables such as megatonnage or numbers of warheads. All major variables must be identified and their quantitative and qualitative interrelationships understood. What, for example, are the trade-offs between yield and accuracy? Which combinations of variables are potentially the most lethal under a variety of conditions?

Minimally, any assessment must include the interrelationships of the following major static variables and their relationships to the more dynamic variables identified above:

1. numbers of launch vehicles
2. numbers of warheads or force loadings
3. accuracy of warheads
4. yield of warheads
5. throw-weight or lift capacity of the launch vehicle

The most lethal combination of variables is the accuracy and the number of warheads deployed. Large numbers can be distributed over area targets (cities, industrial complexes, energy or transportation systems, and military bases) with greater destructive potential than fewer, but larger, warheads. Accuracy is the most lethal variable against fixed, hardened targets such as missile silos. The United States currently has a commanding lead in both numbers and accuracy. The Soviet advantage in missile throw-weight could be exploited to match or overcome the U.S. lead in numbers of warheads, but even this Soviet advantage has been blown out of proportion in terms of its relationship to strategic stability and SALT II. Credible deterrence can be maintained in the face of numerical imbalances, as the Soviets have demonstrated during their many years of inferiority to U.S. nuclear forces. More important, the *treaty* will allow MIRVs to be placed on existing heavy missiles (about 300), but additional heavy missiles may not be deployed. The *protocol* would prohibit new MIRVs that increase the number of warheads aboard existing vehicles, thereby slowing the pace of the Soviet

MIRV program when compared with the potential for more rapid MIRV deployments in the absence of a treaty. Further, to aid in the verification of sublimits placed on MIRVed launchers, the two sides have agreed that any missile of a type tested with a MIRV is to be counted as a MIRVed launcher when deployed. This means that, since the Soviet Union has deployed single-warhead versions of the SS-19 and the SS-18, all these will be counted as MIRVed, further impeding the Soviet ability to exploit their throw-weight advantage. Finally, with warheads numbering in the thousands for both sides, it is increasingly difficult to demonstrate the strategic significance of throw-weight advantages, especially in light of the U.S. Trident, MX, and cruise missile programs.

"Essential equivalence" and the attendant focus on force asymmetries should not be allowed to continue as the focal point of the SALT II debate. The president, the Senate, and the attentive public should not lose sight of more critical issues. The present debate over treaty ratification offers an opportunity for examining the SALT process and strategic doctrine in the broadest possible framework.

The Missions Approach to Strategic Planning: "Essential equivalence" is both a response to and a stimulus for the American preoccupation with numerical and technological fine-tuning of the strategic balance. The real measure of a nation's strategic nuclear deterrent is its ability to perform assigned missions. General Maxwell Taylor recently stressed this objective in his conclusion that whatever real meaning there is in essential equivalence is subsumed under the concept of "credible and high confidence deterrence." He argues that if SALT II fails,

...the size of our forces should be determined not by the need for rough parity with comparable elements of Soviet forces, but by the weapons needed to destroy specific Soviet targets....The destructive potential of our forces would be measured and publicly described in terms of their capacity to inflict damage in multiples of the losses suffered by the Soviet Union in World War II. Thus we would lessen the fixation on weapons numbers, moderate the danger of a senseless arms race for numerical parity or superiority, and utilize the interruption in negotiations to develop a more rational and effective strategic policy...["What If Salt II Fails?" *AEI Defense Review* (Vol. 2, No. 4)].

The credibility of a missions approach to strategic stability as compared with "essential equivalence" must be assessed in the larger context of U.S. strategic doctrine and deterrence theory.

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR STRATEGIC STABILITY

The theory of stable mutual deterrence forms the foundation of official American strategic thinking. Developed from the late 1950's to the mid-1960's, with modifications still in progress, the consensus that has

emerged is that (1) both sides are required to have second-strike retaliatory forces that could survive a first strike, and (2) both sides must be vulnerable to the other's second-strike forces. The two main elements in the model of stable deterrence are *survivability* of weapons and *vulnerability* of societies.

Official discussions of strategic stability in the United States emphasize both crisis instability and arms race instability that could lead to first-strike incentives or calculations that the costs of a nuclear exchange are worth the risks. Stability maintenance requires substantial and continuing efforts to ensure the adequacy, reliability, survivability, and military effectiveness of deterrent forces. Secretary of Defense Brown in the *Annual Defense Department Reports* for both fiscal years 1979 and 1980 delineated the requirements for stable deterrence on which the Carter administration bases U.S. strategic programs and SALT II:

1. survivability
2. assured destruction
3. flexibility
4. essential equivalence

The first condition, previously discussed, requires the continued maintenance of survivable retaliatory forces. The concept of "assured destruction" evolves from the McNamara era, and refers to the required capability of U.S. retaliatory force to inflict an unacceptable level of urban-industrial (and some military) damage on the Soviet Union, even after absorbing a full-scale Soviet attack. McNamara first defined "unacceptable damage" as destruction of 20-25 per cent of the Soviet population and 50 per cent of Soviet industry. Secretary Brown initially defined unacceptable damage as destruction of a minimum of 200 major Soviet cities (32 per cent of the population and 65 per cent of industry), but avoided specifying numbers in his report for FY 1980.

"No aspect of the...debate is more impoverished or misleading than the comparative 'box scores'..."

Flexibility refers to the capability of U.S. strategic forces to respond to a Soviet attack on a lesser scale than all-out retaliation against Soviet cities, including "limited" attacks against Soviet military targets such as hardened missile silos. These flexible response options, first introduced into U.S. strategic doctrine by Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger in 1974, were the source of great controversy, since they advocated that the United States develop improved, hard-target counterforce capabilities that would threaten Soviet retaliatory forces, and which many arms control advocates

therefore considered destabilizing to mutual deterrence. Nevertheless, the concept and counterforce weapons programs were continued by the Ford and Carter administrations on the grounds that they added to the credibility of U.S. deterrence.

Essential equivalence introduced a new political element into the U.S. concept of strategic stability, requiring not only survivability of weapons and assured destruction of Soviet society but, in addition, a rough balance in perceived nuclear capabilities to preclude any potential political advantage that either side might achieve through coercive diplomacy.

DOMESTIC OPPOSITION TO SALT II

The doctrinal innovations of flexible targeting options and essential equivalence have become the major theoretical vehicles for attacking SALT II. Critics fear SALT II will preclude or, at the least, complicate U.S. efforts to maintain these two "requirements" of strategic stability. Their arguments explicitly or implicitly view the nuclear balance and strategic stability as indeed delicate, and they fear that two essential requirements for mutual deterrence, the *survivability* of weapons and the *vulnerability* of societies, will no longer be credible in the 1980's. The primary means of attacking SALT II on the survivability/vulnerability question is through the specific issues of America's ICBM vulnerability and Soviet civil defense programs. Detailed assessments of both these important issues are beyond the scope of this discussion. However, a summary of major points is necessary before their relationships to SALT II can be analyzed.

ICBM Vulnerability: The potential Soviet counterforce threat to the U.S. Minuteman ICBM force is viewed with substantial alarm, since increasingly accurate Soviet MIRVs could be deployed in much greater numbers due to the larger throw-weight of Soviet ICBM systems. By 1985, it is theorized, the Soviet Union could destroy 90 per cent of the U.S. Minuteman force with only a fraction of its MIRVed ICBMs. Some critics believe this condition of America's ICBM vulnerability would have serious implications for strategic stability even though SLBMs at sea and alert bombers, the other two legs of the strategic triad, would survive with a capacity to retaliate with thousands of warheads.

Some analysts argue that the existence of a Soviet capability to threaten the U.S. Minuteman force with only a fraction of its ICBM force constitutes an asymmetry of forces that could have adverse political and military implications. These include greater Soviet and lesser U.S. freedom of action in the employment of conventional military forces; greater Soviet latitude in the utilization of nuclear weapons for political coercion; and the development of perceived U.S. inferiority by third nations that could have a wide impact on U.S. foreign policy. Nevertheless, no one has found evidence of these kinds of nuclear brinkmanship and nuclear "Trotskyism" in Soviet strategic doctrine. This operational overemphasis in regard to the putative uses of

strategic nuclear weapons is a product of American strategic analysts. A more accurate assessment, according to Benjamin Lambeth, is presented in these terms:

To say that Soviet military doctrine places an important premium on numerical abundance of forces...is not to argue that Soviet military planners harbor any belief that strategic superiority can either supply "instant courage" in crises or that it necessarily constitutes a tool that can be employed in specific and preplanned ways to exact concessions from the adversary in coercive diplomacy....There is nothing in the Soviet military literature even remotely comparable to the kinds of sophisticated—if frequently unpersuasive—arguments one characteristically finds employed by proponents of strategic superiority in the West [*How to Think About Soviet Military Doctrine* (The Rand Corporation, 1978)].

Nevertheless, a number of strategic analysts postulate through a variety of scenarios a major U.S.-Soviet confrontation during which the Soviet Union launches a first strike limited to American ICBMs, non-alert bombers, and SLBMs in port. By withholding some ICBMs as well as SLBMs and strategic bombers from the attack, Soviet leaders might believe that U.S. decisionmakers would be deterred from carrying out a retaliatory second strike, since the Soviets would surely counter with a third strike against U.S. cities previously spared from attack (see, for example, Paul Nitze's "Detering Our Deterrent" in *Foreign Policy* [Winter, 1976/1977]). The issue is not assured destruction but, rather, assured retaliation.

There are numerous reasons for asserting that the assured retaliation of a U.S. second strike is far more credible than the postulated Soviet third strike. Proponents of the blackmail scenario have never suggested any plausible Soviet demands for so bold a gamble. More important is the fact that U.S. strategic forces would be on full alert during a crisis, increasing their survivability and the potential retaliatory damage the Soviet Union would suffer should retaliation occur. Operational and technical difficulties involved in such an attack would be formidable and would impose severe requirements of timing, coordination, and reliability, all in an atmosphere of uncertainty as to whether the U.S. would launch its ICBMs upon verification of the Soviet attack.

Even were the attack successful in destroying American ICBMs, the distinction between counterforce targets and countervalue targets, so important to the strategic analyst, would be lost on a country experiencing the detonation and fallout from thousands of nuclear warheads. Millions of Americans would die from fallout and, in some cases, from blast and thermal effects, because many populated areas are located near counterforce targets, hence increasing the probability of retaliation. Everything learned about nuclear fallout suggests that most of the United States and parts of Canada and Mexico would become high casualty areas. Soviet leaders should be further deterred from nuclear brinkmanship, for were the U.S. to strike first, reversing the

scenario, the residual balance of forces would be even less favorable to the Soviet Union, since 75 per cent of its forces have been deployed in the more vulnerable land-based ICBM mode.

The discussion of first-strike scenarios, so common in the U.S., exhibits a simplistic military/technical perspective remote from the world of political decisionmaking. There is a difference between what technical experts can think and what political decisionmakers can decide. McGeorge Bundy described the gap between the technical and the political worlds this way:

In the real world of real political leaders—whether here or in the Soviet Union—a decision that would bring even one hydrogen bomb on one city of one's own country would be recognized in advance as a catastrophic blunder; ten bombs on ten cities would be a disaster beyond history; and a hundred bombs on a hundred cities are unthinkable ["To Cap the Volcano," *Foreign Affairs* (October, 1969)].

The Soviet Union has been no more willing than the United States to risk nuclear war to further marginal political interests. The avoidance of nuclear war has been a fundamental principle of Soviet foreign policy since 1956, when Krushchev in a sober assessment of nuclear war reversed the classic Leninist doctrine of the inevitability of war between capitalist states and socialist states.

Soviet Civil Defense and SALT II: The decision by the United States and the Soviet Union during and after SALT I to forego ABM systems stimulated new interest in passive or civil defense measures. Many of the same strategic analysts who express alarm over ICBM vulnerability and assured retaliation also express concern about the relationship between Soviet civil defense programs and assured destruction.* The extreme form of this argument posits that Soviet civil defense threatens to negate the U.S. deterrence by protecting the Soviet population so extensively that a nuclear exchange would result in "acceptable" levels of damage.

Does the Soviet Union have a civil defense program capable of protecting a large portion of its population and industrial base in the face of a retaliatory nuclear attack, and does SALT II exacerbate the problem? These assessments of Soviet passive defenses seem to understate problems in at least four major areas:

1. The complexities of activating the system
2. The vulnerability of key economic choke points
3. Casualties from fallout and societal disruption
4. Unique political vulnerabilities of the Soviet state

Systems Complexities: Blast shelters, optimistically described as capable of protecting 50-60 per cent of the Soviet population in all potentially targeted cities, have been judged inadequate in construction, food and water stocks, and ventilation systems to assure survival for large numbers of people over a long enough period that they would be protected from all *threats*, including fallout and societal disruption. Those not sheltered must evacuate, march long distances (up to thirty miles), and

construct their own "hasty shelters," a process estimated to take from seventy-two hours to a week (and this not in winter).

The time and logistical preparation for sheltering the evacuating population, military alerts, and submarines leaving port would provide considerable warning to U.S. intelligence. A surprise attack against the United States under such conditions could result only from a complete breakdown of our national leadership. Further, the emphasis on population shifts ignores the fact that retaliation is not calculated to be a single spasm, but would occur over time—weeks or months—allowing for retargeting or simply waiting for the reoccupation of evacuated cities.

Economic Choke Points: In emphasizing programs to "harden" Soviet defense industries, analysts such as Leon Goure and T.K. Jones seem overly sanguine about Soviet ability to protect major economic choke points such as energy, transportation, steel, chemicals, food production, and the characteristically high density urban/industrial complexes. Examples of economic concentration are easy to find. Virtually all chemical plants are located in 25 cities; there are only 18 integrated iron and steel mills; the Central and Volga regions (population 60 million) get their electric power from 3 hydroelectric and 2 atomic power plants; there are only 34 sizable petroleum refineries; all automobiles are manufactured in 12 cities; there are 19 aluminum factories; all diesel engines are produced in 5 cities; 9 tractor plants manufacture 80 per cent of the entire Soviet output; there are only 8 major shipbuilding works; and the list goes on. High economic concentrations make the question of rescue, repair, and recovery uncertain at best, as does the critical and unknown variable—long-term effects of fallout.

Nuclear Fallout: Claims for Soviet civil defense systems are based primarily on only two of the three major effects of nuclear weapons. Undoubtedly, millions could be protected from initial blast, thermal, and even initial radiation effects, but not from residual nuclear radiation caused by particles contaminated with material from the radioactive cloud of a nuclear explosion falling back to earth over a wide geographic area and over a period ranging from hours to months. The unquantifiable variable—radiation casualties—and casualties resulting from societal disruption would, without doubt, create extensive national destruction, and in all probability destruction on a regional, even global, basis. These variables are dismissed or ignored by strategic analysts who are preoccupied with war fighting capability rather than deterrence. Moreover, the high ceilings allowed under SALT II are more than adequate to overwhelm a civil defense system far more extensive than that deployed by the Soviets to date. SALT II critics assume, but do not explain, the linkage between their fears of

*See Nitze, *op. cit.*; T.K. Jones, Hearings, Civil Defense Panel, House Armed Services Committee, *Civil Defense Review* (1976); Leon Goure, *War Survival in Soviet Strategy* (University of Miami, 1976); and Fred M. Kaplan, "The Soviet Civil Defense Myth," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (March, 1978, and April, 1978).

Soviet civil defense and the treaty. Uniformly, they overstate the force requirements for societal destruction in the absence of ABM systems.

Unique Vulnerabilities of the Soviet State: Strategic analysts generally, and the civil defense debaters specifically, ignore unique postattack political vulnerabilities that must certainly occupy the attention of Soviet leaders and contribute to the deterrent effect of U.S. nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union is a multinational state with over two hundred ethnic minorities who, collectively, make up a majority of the population. The "nationalities problem" preceded the Communist regime, and in spite of the rhetoric of proletarian internationalism it continues to create major ethnodemographic problems. The Soviet leadership cannot clearly assess its ability to maintain political control of restive minorities, many with a history of political independence, who might exploit the societal disruption of a nuclear attack. The problem is exacerbated by the concentration of Soviet cities and Soviet missile deployments. Both countervalue and counterforce targets are located near large population centers and, more critically, near areas of high concentrations of the Russian-Slavic population. If one assumes large numbers of survivors from a nuclear attack, Soviet minorities would seem to have the highest potential rate of survival, given the lower concentration of targets in their homelands.

Even if the Soviet regime were not politically incapacitated and could deal effectively with nationalist challenges to central authority, what problems might they face from the Chinese or from their "allies" in Eastern Europe? These critical political questions are largely ignored by American strategic analysts and by SALT II critics preoccupied by technical issues and perceived delicate balances of forces. The vulnerabilities unique to the Soviet system do considerable damage to the credibility of those analysts who argue that the Soviet leadership would risk a nuclear war for marginal political or military goals.

The arguments above have attempted to identify the major concerns expressed by critics of SALT II. Recent weeks have seen the addition of the problem of verification in reaction to the loss of U.S. intelligence bases in Iran. This issue also seems blown out of strategic importance by the anti-SALT, delicate-balance school. Any treaty based on access to foreign installations does not inspire confidence over the long term. "National technical means" of verification sanctioned by SALT includes satellite observation, U-2 (and probably SR-71) reconnaissance aircraft along the Soviet border, missile-tracking ships on the high seas, and some less critical listening posts in other countries (Turkey, for example). The provisions of the *treaty* can be monitored by these methods with, if not absolute confidence, a high degree of confidence. The listening posts in Iran downgrade, but do not eliminate, U.S. ability to monitor Soviet tests that might violate the *protocol* to the treaty. The *protocol* is a shorter duration agreement designed to codify restrictions on weapons modernization. The Iranian bases provided data on the launch phase of ICBM tests. Other intelligence means

monitor midflight performance and the missile-warhead impact stage in the Kamchatka Peninsula and Pacific Ocean.

Lieutenant General Daniel Graham recently asserted that the loss of the listening posts meant the U.S. was being "robbed of a 24 hour tip-off process that is absolutely critical to verification." What General Graham and members of the U.S. Senate who do not share the president's confidence in our residual capabilities to monitor specific provisions fail to take fully into account is the SALT II provision requiring prior notification of missile testing. The required notification provides time to put all U.S. intelligence resources in place. The Soviets would be taking grave political risks to assume that covert tests could go undetected in their midflight and splashdown phases, or that announced tests could violate *protocol* restrictions without detection.

"Any treaty based on access to foreign installations does not inspire confidence over the long term."

The more critical issues for the president are not weapons asymmetries, ICBM vulnerability, civil defense, or verification as defined by SALT II critics and the delicate-balance coalition. The president's dilemma, as he prepares for the SALT II ratification struggle, is how to discuss those issues sufficiently to allay the anxieties they have aroused in the Senate and among the attentive public, and at the same time prevent the treaty's opponents from concentrating the debate on arcane technical issues that put the president on the defensive.

What the majority of anti-SALT II critics want is a fundamental reexamination of U.S. strategic doctrine, and they are hoping for growing acceptance among American strategists of the idea of fighting a nuclear war. The acceptance of war-fighting is found not only in debate but in changes in U.S. targeting and force-procurement programs. The real SALT II debate is between the "war fighters" and the strategic stabilizers over how far counterforce capabilities should be allowed to go. The "war fighters" advocate strategies and force levels that reflect the traditional belief that weapons exist to fight wars, not just deter them. Some, including Secretary of Defense Brown, argue that war-fighting or limited counterforce options merely add to the credibility of deterrence. Careful reading, however, makes it clear that for many it is war-fighting, not deterrence, that they are attempting to make credible.

The Carter administration, while slowing the pace, continues to include nuclear war-fighting options in U.S. strategic doctrine and weapons procurement, including the MX missile—a system that may be justi-

fied in terms of insuring the survivability of our ICBM forces, but not in terms of accuracy and yield threatening to Soviet ICBMs. The SALT II debate is the place and time to reconsider, modify, or draw the line on the trends toward war-fighting doctrine and return to a clear and unambiguous policy of deterrence only. Defending SALT II through the "missions" approach to deterrence described above may be the most convincing strategy. Forces deployed under this concept would be planned for their ability to destroy specific targets, not by the need for parity or essential equivalence with comparable elements of Soviet forces. So long as force ceilings remain high, as a diversity of forces is maintained to ensure survivability, and as ABM prohibitions remain in effect to ensure societal vulnerability, the president's case is strong. The treaty is not frozen in time; it guides the U.S. and the Soviet Union through one short period—to 1985—when SALT III will address the problems of stability apparent by then and anticipated for the future. In the meantime, nothing in the treaty precludes the president from dealing with the

alleged problems of destabilization of U.S.-Soviet mutual deterrence caused either by new military technology or marginal Soviet force advantages.

Paradoxically, for the arms reductionist, if SALT III succeeds in bringing about major force reductions, existing weapons asymmetries may become more significant. Essential equivalence can be loosely defined under high force ceilings. The perceived instability of a transitional stage to a significantly lower ceiling may require greater force and doctrinal symmetries. If force reductions are ever achieved, the problems of maintaining strategic stability under lower ceilings would be greater, since technological innovation or cheating could more easily take on military and political significance. The fact that we are already hearing these alarms directed against SALT II, a treaty that requires no reductions in U.S. forces but allows both quantitative and qualitative growth, is evidence of how far we are from controlling or reducing nuclear weapons. Doctrinal clarity rejecting war-fighting by the president as part of the SALT II debate would be a significant step. WV

How the Russians Look at SALT



Walter C. Clemens, Jr.

Russia's Aesop, Ivan Krylov, said: "You can be sure the puppy is strong, because it barks at the elephant." The Russian bear is much more powerful than a puppy, but it stands on feet of clay. The United States is not an elephant, but it is by far the world's strongest economic and military force, striking both respect and fear in Soviet leaders, from Lenin through Brezhnev.

The U.S. economy is more than twice the size of the Soviet and much more dynamic. Our strategic arsenal also overshadows Moscow's. According to Defense Secretary Harold Brown, the United States today has nearly 10,000 strategic nuclear warheads aboard our land- and sea-based missiles and bombers, compared to

5,000 for the Soviets. These power realities help explain Kremlin complexes about Moscow's persistent *Avis* posture in world affairs.

Russia, like the United States, has championed the cause of arms limitation—not just in recent years, but after World War I, and through much of the nineteenth century. But Americans and Russians approach this subject from quite different historical, geographical, and cultural traditions. Do they mean the same thing when they espouse disarmament? Let us look at seven basic problems.

1. *Have the Russians been sincere in seeking disarmament, or have they manipulated the negotiations to paralyze the West and buy time to build up their own forces?*

Most governments make arms control proposals designed to perpetuate their own strengths and reduce

WALTER C. CLEMENS, JR., is Professor of Political Science at Boston University and an Associate of the Harvard Russian Research Center.