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Richard E. Hayes

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I. Introduction*

The failure of the United States and the Soviet Union to make meaningful progress in strategic arms control at the Moscow Summit, and the bleak outlook for arms control in the immediate future suggest that there is something wrong in the way which armament negotiations are being approached. This article argues that in two crucial sets of negotiations--the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) discussions--the United States has adopted a bargaining strategy so totally inconsistent with the goals which American spokesmen have announced that it seems to be explicitly designed to prevent their accomplishment. The argument leading to this conclusion can be summarized in four points.

1. In both the SALT and MBFR discussions, the United States is seeking to control arms competition and, ultimately, to reduce armament levels.
2. The United States has established "equality" of forces as its minimum acceptable outcome in each of these negotiations.
3. The United States is using a "bargaining chip" strategy in each of these negotiations.
4. Equality and a bargaining chip strategy are, together, sufficient

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to prevent arms reduction and are likely to produce a new round of arms competition.

Stated in this form, the argument requires elaboration and explanation. At this very high level of abstraction, however, it is possible to see the massive inconsistency between the current means and ends of American foreign policy and to understand that United States policy in SALT and MBFR is inherently self-defeating and requires reformulation.

II. American Goals in SALT and MBFR: Arms Control, Arms Reduction and Security Through Equality

The United States has long had a goal of halting arms competition and reducing arms levels in both the SALT and MBFR negotiations. President Nixon enunciated these goals for the SALT discussions before the United Nations General Assembly as early as September, 1969.¹ Secretary of Defense Schlesinger noted in the Annual Defense Department Report for fiscal 1975 that, "we are eager to begin a reduction of strategic forces by mutual agreement."² The title of the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction negotiations implies commitments to lower arms levels. Joseph J. Sisco, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, detailed American MBFR goals in an appearance before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, "we and our allies hope by patient negotiating effort to probe Soviet willingness to address the real issues of military security in Europe and negotiate an agreement that will maintain the security of both East and West at lower levels of confrontation and cost."³

Checking arms competition and lowering force levels are not the only goals of the United States in these arms control discussions. Policy makers are generally careful to include references to security and equality

of force levels. Arthur A. Hartman, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, for example, sees security through equality as the main U.S. goal in MBFR discussions.

"So far, both sides have agreed that MBFR would contribute to the goal of insuring security and stability in Europe and that any agreement reached should not diminish the security of either side. . .

"The West has proposed that the final goal of ground force reductions by both sides be a common ceiling for overall ground force manpower. At present, NATO has 770,000 men in its ground forces in the area, the Warsaw Pact has 925,000 men. The disparity of nearly 150,000 men between these figures is a substantial one, and we believe the main objective of the negotiations should be to eliminate it."⁴

This desire for security and the accompanying assumption that security can be achieved only through equality also appears in Dr. Schlesinger's explanation of U.S. goals in SALT II and MBFR.

"It is. . .to put boundaries around arms competition that we are engaged with the Soviet Union in SALT II. And it is to achieve a similar objective through a more stable balance at lower force levels in Central Europe, that we and our NATO Allies are engaged in negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions with the Warsaw Pact states.

"While we pursue negotiations about mutual reductions of arms. . .it is my judgment that we must maintain a world wide military equilibrium."⁵

Immediately prior to the Moscow Summit, Secretary of State Kissinger emphasized the American commitment to the notion of equality.

"Our objectives with respect to the control of arms are as follows:

"Obviously neither side should have a military advantage as the result of any agreement that may be made.

"Secondly, neither side should be able to have a political advantage as a result of any agreements that might be made.

"Thirdly, neither side should believe that such an advantage exists--even if in reality it does not exist--because the perception is more important in many respects than reality.

"And finally, neither side, no ally, nor interested country of either side, should have such a perception."⁶

Thus, American goals in SALT and MBFR are clear--control of arms competition and reduction of force levels while maintaining security. Preservation of security is seen as requiring approximate equality of force levels. Such equality is not seen as requiring precise matching of the Soviet Union weapon for weapon in each category. Rather, terms such as "essential equality" have been developed in recognition that dissimilar weapons systems may counter one another. The best example of this is reliance by the United States in the late 1960's and early 1970's on smaller, more accurate strategic warheads to counter the heavier, less accurate strategic weapons of the Soviet Union. A less familiar example is the use by NATO of superior tactical aircraft and logistics capabilities to offset Warsaw Pact numerical advantages in Europe. American policy makers assume that equality of forces, whatever form that equality may take, is a prerequisite to security.

III. The Means--A "Bargaining Chip" Negotiating Strategy

"Bargaining chip" is a label, not a precise concept. As used in this essay, the term refers to a practice of developing, deploying or maintaining forces in order to have resources in negotiations. In their most crude form, bargaining chips are an effort to get something for nothing--an obsolete weapon is traded for a modern one, the threat of a new weapons system is balanced against an existing system.

Both President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger have repeatedly argued that a decision by the United States to unilaterally reduce its ground forces in Europe would be a serious error because it would remove the incentive for the Warsaw Pact states to negotiate a mutual force reduction. In this way, the issue of troop withdrawal is not argued on

its merits--the utility of the forces in Europe and the threat of military attack there--but rather on the utility of the forces as a "bargaining chip" to induce concessions in the MBFR negotiations.

In the fiscal 1975 Annual Defense Department Report, Secretary of Defense Schlesinger shows this same horse-trading outlook on the strategic weapons being discussed in SALT.

"Strategic programs. . . affect the prospects for arms control . . . and specific programs are the coin of this particular realm. . . ."⁷

"We are. . . proposing in the FY 1975 budget several strategic R & D programs. . . as hedges against the unknown outcome of SALT II and the uncertain actions of the USSR. The United States is prepared to reduce, stay level, or if need be increase our level of strategic arms, but in any case, that level will be fixed by the actions of the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Union insists on moving ahead with a new set of strategic capabilities, we will be forced to match them. We would prefer, however, to reduce the present balance in such a way that strategic equivalence can be achieved at the lowest cost and least destabilizing level of forces."⁸

These "hedges against unknown outcomes" which are also "the coin of this particular realm" are the American bargaining chips in the SALT II negotiations.

IV. The Inconsistency of Ends and Means

The first three points of the argument can virtually be stipulated. The United States is seeking to curb arms competition and reduce force levels. Equality of forces is the minimum acceptable outcome enunciated by American spokesmen in both the SALT and MBFR discussions. The United States is taking a bargaining chip approach to these negotiations. So what? All these things may be true, but they are unimportant unless the combination of desire for equality and bargaining chip negotiating strategy can be shown to prevent arms reduction and increase the chances of a new round of arms competition.

The notion of equality of forces, by itself, does not present any inherent obstacle to meaningful arms control. Equal forces are perhaps the most stable of all levels--neither side has an advantage on which it might be tempted to build toward superiority; neither is behind and likely to embark on new weapons development or deployment out of fear of enemy dominance. Moreover, equality is not, by itself, in any way inconsistent with force reduction. Weapons equivalence at lower levels is an option in arms negotiations.

Nor are bargaining chip strategies an inherent obstacle to the halting of arms competition. The agreements reached at the Washington Naval Conference in 1922 were, in essence, an agreement by the United States to abandon a massive shipbuilding program begun during World War I, in return for naval restraint on the part of other powers. Similarly, the Soviet Union received a major concession in throw-weight from the United States in the SALT I negotiations in return for a temporary agreement limiting the number of launchers deployed. In those same negotiations, the United States gave up an Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) system of uncertain feasibility and facing considerable Congressional opposition in exchange for a limit on ABM deployments.

There are, however, serious problems with bargaining chip strategies. No intelligent opponent will trade something for nothing. No one would accuse the negotiators of the Soviet Union or the other Warsaw Pact states of being fools. Hence, bargaining chips must be given credibility. For new weapons systems, credibility is derived from vigorous research, development and testing programs as well as public discussion of the need for the new weapons. For obsolete weapons systems, this means stubborn

defense of the utility and importance of the weapons system. Where old functions are no longer needed, new uses must be found. There can be no signs of weakness or lack of determination in the development, deployment or maintenance of bargaining chips. Programs must move forward steadily.

There are two negative consequences of this strategy. First, new weapons systems develop a momentum of their own. This momentum is composed of money invested, project phases completed, civilian and military clientele groups who see personal and professional achievements in the program. Second, both obsolete and new weapons systems attract a group of believers--persons in the public, scholarly community and decision-making circles who become convinced that the programs are important.

It is in exactly this manner that the opportunity to negotiate a ban on Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles (MIRV's) was lost. The momentum of the new weapons system carried the program into the testing and deployment phases during the SALT I negotiations. Once the United States had tested these weapons the Soviet Union would not accept a ban on them since "national means of verification" (relied upon exclusively in the SALT I agreements) are not sufficient to detect changes in warhead deployment, while they can be relied upon to detect testing of the new warheads. Hence, MIRV, potentially a destabilizing force in the nuclear balance because it could be used as the basis for building a first-strike force, remains today unchecked and is a major obstacle to further strategic arms limitation.

In a similar fashion, the impassioned defense of obsolete weapons systems such as the forward based nuclear forces of the United States,

the B-52 bomber force and the large numbers of American ground troops in Europe tends to frustrate negotiations about arms reduction. The public defense of such systems and the search for new functions to show their "indispensability" leads to a position in which they cannot be abandoned. This, in turn, puts a floor under force levels and prevents arms reduction.

In addition to the tendency for new weapons systems used as bargaining chips to become full fledged weapons systems and of obsolete systems to become "indispensable" when placed in that role, bargaining chips have another deleterious effect--they tend to beget other bargaining chips. This can take two forms--(1) you get what you pay for and (2) arms escalation. The Washington Naval Conference was a good example of trading one bargaining chip for another. The famous 5:5:3 deal in which the U.S. and Great Britain agreed to equal naval forces while the Japanese agreed to not exceed 60% of their forces was actually a deal where no one gave up very much. The United States abandoned a massive shipbuilding program which Congress was very unlikely to fund at anything like its original wartime level. Great Britain, financially in trouble and afraid the United States was challenging her to a naval arms race, saw that threat ended and made concessions which largely amounted to scrapping large numbers of battleships and heavy cruisers which had been rendered obsolete by rapidly changing naval technology. Japan agreed not to exceed a fleet level which was well above her 1922 force level and which she was not likely to achieve for many years anyway. SALT I showed this same tendency to trade one bargaining chip for another. An American agreement to limit ABM deployment with Congress unlikely to vote

sufficient funds for deployment anyway was traded for Soviet agreement to stop increasing the number of her Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and Submarine Based Ballistic Missiles at a time when it now appears the Soviets desired to test a new generation of missiles rather than deploy larger numbers of the existing ones. At the recent Moscow summit the agreement to limit ABM's to only one site in each country at a time when neither the U.S. nor the U.S.S.R. had plans to construct a second site, was a trade of meaningless bargaining chips. This trading of "chip" for "chip" may be arms control of a sort, but it certainly creates no incentive or pressure for arms reduction.

In order to negate a bargaining chip strategy, an opponent must have chips of his own, particularly if the initial position is one of approximate force equality. Given force equality, trading a meaningful arms program for a bargaining chip means an outcome below equality. Hence, preparations for negotiations must include the preparation of bargaining chips. This means vigorous research and development of new weapons systems, vigorous defense of the importance of old systems and a public position of resolve not to be the lesser of two powers. Hence, given a position of equality, a goal of future equality and a bargaining chip strategy, negotiations must concern themselves with cancelling the bargaining chips of the opponent. There is no pressure towards arms reduction. Moreover, if an asymmetrical deal is made (one side makes an error) or if no deal is made at all, or if even a portion of the bargaining chips are excluded from the agreement (remember MIRV) then an increase in the quantity or quality of forces will occur. In other words, the combination of goals of equality and a strategy of bargaining chips is

sufficient to prevent arms reduction and is likely to produce a new round of arms competition.

V. Resolution of the Problem

At the high level of abstraction at which this critique is being made, resolution of the problem does not appear difficult. The United States could avoid the inconsistency between ends and means by changing either the ends or the means. The goal of checking arms competition could be modified. The requirement of equality could be abandoned. Or, the bargaining chip strategy could be changed.

While solution of the problem through any of these three kinds of action is possible, some are clearly preferable to others. Abandoning goals of arms limitation and reduction would be an error--it would be allowing choice of means to dictate choice of ends and it would lead toward expensive and dangerous arms competition. The goal of security through equality is perhaps more amenable to change. The basic goal here is security and the linkage between security and equality is one which, while widely accepted by policy-makers, has not been clearly demonstrated. NATO has lived for years with ground force asymmetry in Europe. Not long ago the Nixon administration was explaining that "strategic sufficiency" rather than "essential equality" was the standard by which the strategic weapons balance should be measured. It seems clear that some strategic gap is tolerable, though deciding exactly how much of a gap is safe at a particular time is not an easy task. Politically, of course, few American leaders are willing to put themselves in a position where they can be charged with allowing the United States to become a "second" military power. It might not be too much to ask of the

administration which reopened relations with China and provided nuclear capabilities to Egypt without arousing public wrath to explain that some force asymmetry might be desirable as a way of inducing genuine force reductions.

Probably the most promising way of avoiding the current inconsistency between means and ends, however, is to alter the bargaining chip approach to these key negotiations. Senator Case has recently suggested how this might be done.

"If we assume that all countries want to reduce arms and reduce the expense of arms and reduce the risks that they bring to us, is not the best way to get this done just to start to do it. I do not mean to lay yourself naked to your enemies or anything like that but I mean take a particular item and say, 'we are going to do this now!' It would not be a vital risk. . . I mean something that would be a definite forward step and move inch by inch or foot by foot in that way."⁹

This general approach, use of unilateral initiatives clearly and publicly made, might be productive because, unlike "bargaining chips," it does create a public pressure and a momentum toward lower force levels.

It would appear that the United States is in a position today to make this type of gesture in both the MBFR and SALT II negotiations. In MBFR, the U.S. could announce a schedule of reduction in the forward based nuclear forces in Europe or of ground troops stationed there. These would not have to be hurried withdrawals, nor would they necessarily lead toward withdrawal of all forces. They could be viewed as initiatives and the Warsaw Pact states could then be publicly challenged to match them. There seem to be room for lower force levels in Western Europe. The threat of armed conflict along those borders has greatly decreased from the early 1950's, and the utility of forward nuclear forces has fallen greatly with the development and deployment of SLBM's and ICBM's.

In SALT, the United States could also make meaningful arms reductions without seriously endangering the security of the Western hemisphere. B-52 strategic bombers were originally designed more than 25 years ago and make only a marginal contribution to strategic stability today. Rather than replacing them with the new B-1 bomber, they could be phased out. In SALT, also, forward based nuclear weapons provide an area where unilateral arms reduction initiatives are possible. Over the somewhat longer time span, stationary, land-based ICBM's might provide a similar opportunity. Fred C. Ikle, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, recently testified that these weapons systems are becoming obsolete because of the capacity of satellites to detect their locations and the improving accuracy of offensive nuclear warheads.¹⁰ The United States could take the initiative and announce a program of phasing out these weapons before they are reduced, by the relentless march of technology, to relatively useless bargaining chips.

Of course, not all of these steps should be taken, at least not all at once. The examples are furnished to demonstrate that there are major arms reduction initiatives which the United States might take to create a pressure and momentum toward the goal of lower force levels. It should also be clear that this proposal is not a call for unilateral disarmament. What is being suggested is essentially a bargaining strategy designed to create a climate in which achievements of the policy goals already enunciated by administration spokesmen becomes possible. The risk level of such initiatives would be quite low, though some force asymmetry might result, and the potential reward--genuine arms reduction --quite high.

Footnotes

1. Department of State Bulletin, 61 (No. 1588), December 1, 1969, p. 465., emphasis added.
2. Annual Defense Department Report: FY 1975 (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), p. 42.
3. Department of State Bulletin, 70 (No. 1816), April 15, 1974, p. 383.
4. Department of State Bulletin, 70 (No. 1811), March 11, 1974, p. 245.
5. Annual Defense Department Report, op. cit., p. 2.
6. Press Conference, June 24, 1974, News Release, Department of State, Office of Media Services, PR260/25, June 24, 1974.
7. Annual Defense Department Report, op. cit., p. 27.
8. Ibid., p. 6.
9. U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearing: ACDA Authorization, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session, p. 20.
10. Ibid., p. 8.

One final point should be made. Those who disagree with the arguments presented here will no doubt note that the problem being discussed is created by the interaction of United States policy and the policies of the Soviet Union; while the criticism and call for action are directed only at American decision makers. Such a point is well taken. I would certainly hope to see Soviet decision makers taking the initiative in reducing arms levels. Nevertheless, American policy makers are responsible for taking action which can be expected to produce the desired outcomes. The massive inconsistency between current U.S. policy goals and the negotiating strategy being utilized leaves virtually no chance that the goal of arms reduction can be achieved and presents a serious danger of initiating future arms competition. United States decision makers are under an obligation to take actions which will rectify this inconsistency between American goals and American means.