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COOPERATION THEORY AND DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS IN THE 1950s

By MATTHEW EVANGELISTA*

THE "MOMENT OF HOPE"

PERHAPS the closest the Soviet Union and the NATO powers came to a compromise settlement of the arms race during the 1950s occurred in May 1955. In those days, before the advent of bilateral superpower negotiations on strategic weapons, disarmament talks were held under the auspices of the United Nations.¹ On May 10, 1955, the USSR put forward a proposal that incorporated the main features of an earlier Anglo-French memorandum that had been intended to form the basis for the future work of the UN Disarmament Subcommittee. The United States had already expressed support for the goals of the memorandum, which included, among other things, the total prohibition of the use and manufacture of nuclear weapons; major reductions in all armed forces and conventional armaments; and the establishment of adequate organs of control and inspection. The USSR's adherence to the plan would have entailed cutting back the Soviet armed forces from 5.7 million soldiers to between 1 and 1.5 million. These figures, proposed originally by the Western powers, would have constituted a significantly disproportionate reduction in Soviet forces, compared with the reduction in French, British, and U.S. forces. In return, the Soviets would have benefited from the eventual destruction of stocks of U.S. nuclear weapons, although their own would have been destroyed as well. The USSR seemed willing to accept such a deal.²

* I would like to thank Robert Axelrod, George Bunn, and Charles Glaser for comments on an earlier version of this paper, and the Presidential Initiatives Fund of the University of Michigan for research support.

¹ For a recent discussion of the early negotiations, see McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988), chap. 4. For a more comprehensive account, see Bernhard G. Bechhoefer, *Postwar Negotiations for Arms Control* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1961).

² The classic account of these negotiations is Philip Noel-Baker, *The Arms Race: A Programme for World Disarmament* (New York: Oceana, 1958), 12-30. The Soviet proposal is reprinted in *Documents on Disarmament, 1945-1959*, vol. 1, 1945-1956 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 456-67, and is discussed in a declassified official "Prog-

The initial Western response to the Soviet proposal was favorable. The U.S. delegate to the UN subcommittee, after two days of consultation with his government, announced that the United States was "gratified to find that the concepts which we have put forward over a considerable length of time, and which we have repeated many times during [these] past two months, have been accepted in a large measure by the Soviet Union." Jules Moch, the French representative, exclaimed that "the whole thing looks too good to be true," and the British representative expressed satisfaction that the West's proposals "have now been largely, and in some cases, entirely, adopted by the Soviet Union and made into its own proposals."³ At that point, the Soviets wanted to work out the specific details of an agreement, but the Western governments insisted on a recess.⁴

When the subcommittee met again in the autumn of 1955, the Western delegates refused to discuss the previous proposals. The American representative was instructed to "place a reservation" on the earlier U.S. position, in effect renouncing it in favor of the new Open Skies proposal that President Eisenhower had put forward at the Geneva summit meeting in July.⁵ Thus passed what the main chronicler of these events described as a rare "moment of hope" in postwar disarmament efforts.⁶

How could a disarmament proposal that was ostensibly accepted by both sides fail to lead to an agreement? The question is of more than academic or historical interest. Negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union since the mid-1980s resemble in many ways those of three decades earlier. Today, arms-limitation treaties are difficult to come by, even when both sides apparently agree on the terms. The current negotiations over conventional forces in Europe are a case in point. Theories of the sources of cooperation in international politics that are supported by empirical evidence may be of some help in understanding the barriers to the negotiation of arms treaties. This article uses the his-

ress Report, Proposed Policy of the United States on the Question of Disarmament," vol. 1, May 26, 1955, Special Staff Study for the President, NSC Action No. 1328, by Harold E. Stassen, document located in papers of the Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 2, Folder: "NSC 112/1 Disarmament (3)," Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS [hereafter cited as Eisenhower Library]. A detailed analysis of Soviet objectives is found in Lincoln P. Bloomfield, Walter C. Clemens, Jr., and Franklyn Griffiths, *Khrushchev and the Arms Race: Soviet Interest in Arms Control and Disarmament, 1954-1964* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966).

³ Noel-Baker (fn. 2), 21-22, quotes from the verbatim records of the discussions.

⁴ "Statement by the Deputy United States Representative on the Disarmament Subcommittee (Wadsworth), May 18, 1955," in *Documents on Disarmament* (fn. 2), 1:474.

⁵ Noel-Baker (fn. 2), 23. See also Walt W. Rostow, *Open Skies: Eisenhower's Proposal of July 21, 1955* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).

⁶ Noel-Baker (fn. 2).

torical case of the 1955 disarmament negotiations to evaluate current theories of cooperation.

THEORIES OF COOPERATION

Much of recent discussion among students of international relations has focused on game theoretic models of cooperation and conflict. Robert Axelrod, for example, has suggested that a strategy of Tit-for-Tat reciprocity holds great potential for inducing cooperation even among self-interested states in an anarchic international system. He views arms races as a game of Prisoners' Dilemma: although both sides would prefer to cooperate, each continues to arm for fear that the other side will defect rather than adhere to mutual disarmament. In such a situation, Axelrod argues, if one side takes the initiative and adopts a "nice" strategy (by not being the first to defect) and both sides follow a rule of reciprocity, cooperation can evolve through a Tit-for-Tat mechanism. The main condition is that the two sides anticipate interacting many more times, so that the "shadow of the future" is cast over present actions. Axelrod has explicitly suggested that his cooperation theory should apply to U.S.-Soviet arms negotiations: "Certainly, the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union know that they will both be dealing with each other for a very long time should help establish the necessary conditions [for arms control]."⁷

Axelrod's strategy for cooperation has come under criticism on a number of different scores. Joanne Gowa, for example, challenges the assumption of a unitary rational actor implicit in Axelrod's model. She calls attention to "the problems the strategy may cause in states where power over foreign policy is by design lodged in more than one decision-making institution."⁸ Deborah Welch Larson has argued that the strategy of Tit-for-Tat fails to account for psychological barriers to reciprocity. If the target of a conciliatory action "has an inherent 'bad faith' image of the initiator, a single cooperative action may be ignored, reinterpreted to conform to preexisting beliefs, or discounted as a ploy to trick the target into letting down its guard." She maintains that a strategy of graduated reciprocation in tension reduction, or GRIT, holds greater pros-

⁷ Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 181. Using different assumptions and methods, Steven J. Brams also proposes a Tit-for-Tat strategy for arms control; see *Superpower Games: Applying Game Theory to Superpower Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), chap. 3.

⁸ Gowa, "Anarchy, Egoism, and Third Images: *The Evolution of Cooperation* and International Relations," *International Organization* 40 (Winter 1986), 167-86, at 183.

pects for inducing cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union.⁹

George W. Downs, David M. Rocke, and Randolph M. Siverson have also called attention to the problems created by misperception. Through formal analysis they argue that a Tit-for-Tat strategy may not induce cooperation if even a small percentage of each side's actions are misinterpreted. Such misinterpretations could result, for example, from imperfect information or from the kind of ideological predispositions that lead one to see any action by an adversary in the worst light. In the language of game theory, an act of cooperation could then be misperceived as a defection (and vice versa). Following a rule of reciprocity could yield mutual defection rather than cooperation.¹⁰ Axelrod actually anticipated these effects of misperception and suggested a strategy of less than a tit for a tat as a way of mitigating them, but his critics were not entirely satisfied.¹¹

Whereas many of Axelrod's critics have focused on the reasons his strategy might fail to produce cooperation in a Prisoners' Dilemma game, some have argued that Prisoners' Dilemma itself is not an appropriate representation of many situations in international relations. Downs and his colleagues maintain that many arms races are not Prisoners' Dilemmas, in which each side prefers to cooperate; rather, they are the game of Deadlock, in which at least one side prefers conflict (defection) to cooperation.¹² As Kenneth A. Oye puts it, "When you observe conflict, think Deadlock—the absence of mutual interest—before puzzling over why a mutual interest was not realized."¹³ Others, drawing on the Realist tradition in international relations, have argued that the pursuit of relative advantage severely limits the scope of mutual interests and makes efforts at cooperation even more difficult than advocates of strategies of reciprocity admit.¹⁴

Although much interesting theoretical work on the sources of cooperation has been published in recent years, there have been relatively few attempts to evaluate competing theories through empirical analysis of

⁹ Larson, "Crisis Prevention and the Austrian State Treaty," *International Organization* 41 (Winter 1987), 27–60, at 30–31.

¹⁰ Downs, Rocke, and Siverson, "Arms Races and Cooperation," *World Politics* 38 (October 1985), 118–46.

¹¹ Axelrod (fn. 7), 138, 182–83; Downs et al. (fn. 10), 140–41.

¹² Downs et al. (fn. 10).

¹³ Oye, "Explaining Cooperation under Anarchy: Hypotheses and Strategies," *World Politics* 38 (October 1985), 1–24, at 7.

¹⁴ Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42 (Summer 1988), 485–507; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

historical cases.¹⁵ The case of the 1955 disarmament proposal provides a good opportunity to undertake such an evaluation. The case should prove a difficult test for the generalization that arms races result from Deadlock rather than from Prisoners' Dilemma. Because both sides formally advocated virtually the same terms for an arms agreement, their mutual interests appear to have been self-evident. The 1955 case also appears to challenge the notion of GRIT as a successful strategy for inducing cooperation. If, as Larson argues, GRIT worked to produce Soviet concessions and a big-power agreement on the status of Austria in the spring of 1955, why did it not also work in favor of the disarmament accord that was being negotiated at the same time? One might argue that the failure to conclude a disarmament treaty could be more easily explained by Axelrod's model. But as Larson points out, in 1955, "the 'shadow of the future' did not loom large because at the height of the cold war, from 1948 until Stalin's death, there was little trade and no significant U.S.-Soviet collaboration."¹⁶ Thus, it seems that one of Axelrod's main conditions was not met; and one could argue that if it had been met, cooperation would have been achieved in the form of a disarmament agreement. If, however, the situation was not a Prisoners' Dilemma at all but was a Deadlock, Axelrod's notion of the shadow of the future would not have applied. A close look at the objectives of the two sides at the time should help determine which interpretation of the "game" of disarmament negotiations obtains.

SOVIET OBJECTIVES

Some observers have argued that Soviet interest in the Anglo-French disarmament memorandum was a bluff. Walt W. Rostow has suggested that the USSR's proposals issued in advance of the July 1955 Geneva summit were intended "to encourage complacency in the West." The Soviets' intention, in his view, was not to signal a willingness to restrict their armaments but rather "to induce the West to diminish the attention

¹⁵ Important exceptions include Larson's work (fn. 9), and George Bunn and Rodger A. Payne, "Tit-for-Tat and the Negotiation of Nuclear Arms Control," *Arms Control* 9 (December 1988), 207-33. Axelrod (fn. 7) included a historical discussion of the "live-and-let-live" system of trench warfare during World War I. Tit-for-Tat, GRIT, and other strategies are mentioned, but not systematically compared, in some of the historical case studies in Alexander L. George, Philip J. Farley, and Alexander Dallin, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation: Achievements, Failures, Lessons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). *World Politics* 38 (October 1985), a special issue on cooperation, includes historical case studies but no discussion of GRIT.

¹⁶ Larson (fn. 9), 58.

and outlays devoted to the arms race," while they continued "to close the gap in weapons of mass destruction and to modernize their ground forces."¹⁷ As one of the principal architects of the Open Skies proposal presented by President Eisenhower at the Geneva summit, Rostow cannot, however, be considered a disinterested observer. The main objective of the proposal was, in his words, "to achieve at the summit a positive political and psychological result."¹⁸ It appears that his interpretation of Soviet motives as limited to the sphere of public relations was colored by mirror-imaging.

In the absence of Soviet archival materials, it is difficult to determine for certain Soviet motives; but there is evidence that suggests some genuine Soviet interest in securing an agreement on mutual reductions in armed forces. Furthermore, this evidence seems consistent with our understanding of overall Soviet military policy during this period and the choices facing the Kremlin leadership. Finally, some insights from the Realist critique of cooperation theory—particularly the argument that states seek to maximize relative rather than absolute gains in their dealings with other states—reinforce the interpretation of Khrushchev's disarmament bids as serious.

A number of observers have argued that there was a major change in the USSR's approach to arms negotiations following the death of Stalin. For example, a Soviet defector who had specialized in disarmament at the Foreign Ministry quotes his superior as follows: "We're starting a new policy that will mean serious negotiating on disarmament."¹⁹ He dates the change in policy to 1954.²⁰ A Yugoslav diplomat who was somewhat of a confidant of Khrushchev's, presents further evidence of the new leader's interest in the issue.²¹ Western scholars also recognize Khrushchev's willingness to make concessions in the disarmament sphere and on related issues, such as the status of Austria.²² Soviet scholars, who now openly admit that Stalin's policy toward disarmament negotiations was

¹⁷ Rostow (fn. 5), 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹⁹ Arkady N. Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 78. The veracity of Shevchenko's book has been called into question with regard to the circumstances of his defection, the extent of his personal relations with top Soviet officials, and his value to American intelligence. He has not, however, been challenged on the details of his early years in the Foreign Ministry. See Edward Jay Epstein, "The Spy Who Came In to Be Sold," *New Republic*, July 15 and 22, 1985, 35-42.

²⁰ Shevchenko, personal communication, September 23, 1987.

²¹ Veljko Mičunović, *Moscow Diary*, trans. David Floyd (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 157, 166.

²² Vojtech Mastny, "Kremlin Politics and the Austrian Settlement," *Problems of Communism* 31 (July-August 1982), 37-51; Larson (fn. 9). See also Bloomfield et al. (fn. 2).

not aimed at obtaining agreement, also describe an important change coinciding with Khrushchev's advent to power.²³

A consideration of the overall context of Soviet military policy at the time sheds further light on Soviet motives. Stalin had initiated a costly program to develop atomic and thermonuclear weapons, but he had stifled debate on the implications of such weapons and had not allowed Soviet strategy to evolve to take them into account.²⁴ Thus, the death of Stalin in March 1953 left his successors to deal with a number of pressing issues in the military sphere. During the next few years the Soviet leadership had to make crucial decisions concerning the character and scope of the strategic nuclear weapons program. Khrushchev and his allies appear to have wanted a disarmament agreement as a substitute for expensive new weapons that would undercut his domestic economic plans. In that sense, the timing of Soviet acceptance of the Anglo-French plan is a further indication of Soviet intent.

In August 1953 the Soviets tested their first nuclear weapon that involved thermonuclear reactions. The next step was to develop a true superbomb (as the hydrogen bomb was called at the time), capable in principle of unlimited explosive force. Only in November 1955 did the USSR test such a weapon, with a yield of 1.6 megatons. The United States, by contrast, had already tested a 10-megaton device in October 1952, and a 15-megaton bomb in February 1954.²⁵ In the intervening period the Soviet leadership had to decide how much effort to put into its nuclear program and whether there was any possibility of imposing mutual limits through international negotiations. On the one hand, the Soviets were encouraged by the imminent approach of some rudimentary form of strategic parity; on the other, they were concerned that the U.S. advantage in nuclear technology would nevertheless persist and perhaps increase.

In the mid-1950s Khrushchev and his colleagues faced key decisions as to the appropriate delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons. This is apparent from remarks that he made in his memoirs in reference to discussions within the Soviet leadership over military priorities in the period 1955-1956:

²³ Vladislav Zubok, "SSSR-SShA: put' k peregovoram po razoruzheniiu v iadernyi vek (1953-1955 gg)" [USSR-USA: The road to negotiations on disarmament in the nuclear age (1953-1955)] (Paper presented at a conference at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, October 1988).

²⁴ Matthew Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), chap. 5.

²⁵ David Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 24.

We still had to resolve the question of construction of rocket and aviation armament. That is, we had to create armed forces with the same systems as our probable opponent possessed. These were all airborne systems. They would be planes—bombers—or rockets. We could not yet really rely on rockets then. We were still in a situation where we considered that an air force and bombers were important.²⁶

The context for Khrushchev's remarks was a debate over whether to cut back on plans that Stalin had initiated for a large expansion of the Soviet fleet. Khrushchev maintained that nuclear weapons had made surface ships virtually obsolete and that priority should be given to the development of long-range aircraft and missiles. Khrushchev won this argument, but judging by how often he mentions the issue in the course of his reminiscences, it must have caused a major political battle. He would presumably have welcomed a disarmament agreement that limited some Western forces as the USSR was trimming its navy.

Analysts in the Realist tradition argue that states are unlikely to pursue cooperative agreements if they foresee their adversary receiving relatively greater benefits than they anticipate for themselves. Thus, states do not seek merely to maximize their own gains, but "*to prevent advances in the relative power of others.*"²⁷ According to this logic, if states fear that the rate of growth of their opponent's power exceeds their own, they should seek an agreement that at least stabilizes the status quo even if it does not shift the balance of power in their favor. Such states should even be willing to make concessions and accept an agreement that codifies a relatively disadvantageous situation in the present if they believe the future could be even worse without an agreement.

One of the main motives for Soviet interest in the UN disarmament plan does appear to be the perception of a deteriorating military balance and especially concern about the evolving military situation in Europe.²⁸ In a speech delivered in February 1955, three months before the USSR

²⁶ Nikita S. Khrushchev's transcript of tape-recorded reminiscences, Harriman Library, Columbia University, 920, 923.

²⁷ Joseph M. Grieco, "Realist Theory and the Problem of International Cooperation: Analysis with an Amended Prisoner's Dilemma Model," *Journal of Politics* 50 (August 1988), 600-624, at 602; emphasis in original. See also Grieco (fn. 14), and Waltz (fn. 14).

²⁸ Paradoxically, Soviet proponents of negotiated agreements with the U.S. are often obliged in confronting their domestic critics to argue that relative Soviet *strength* allows for pursuit of arms control rather than that weakness demands it. Some Western analysts have accepted these arguments and assumed that the Soviets were confident of their strength at a time when in fact the nuclear balance heavily favored the U.S. and its allies. See Herbert S. Dinerstein, *War and the Soviet Union: Nuclear Weapons and the Revolution in Soviet Military and Political Thinking*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1962). Soviet moderates were also reluctant to evoke a foreign threat for fear of damaging their program of domestic de-Stalinization. Stalin had used the specter of external enemies to justify internal repression. See Zubok (fn. 23).

presented its disarmament plan, Marshal Georgii Zhukov, the Soviet defense minister, called attention to worrisome developments there. He expressed particular concern over the rearmament of West Germany and its entry into NATO; over the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons with NATO forces; and over the expansion of U.S. military bases.²⁹ The Soviets had already begun to respond to the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear systems in Europe during 1953.³⁰ By 1955 the military and political leadership faced a number of important decisions. The Soviets chose to do more than simply imitate American weapons and strategy. Rather, their response was twofold. In the short term they restructured their air defense forces to respond to nuclear attack and began instructing soldiers in the effects of nuclear weapons.³¹ The Soviet leaders also initiated programs to develop tactical nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles to carry them. As with strategic weapons, they hedged their bets by ordering development of all the systems that they knew the Americans were working on—missiles, artillery, and aircraft.³² Khrushchev may have viewed a disarmament agreement as a way to avoid making tough choices about what systems to produce. He could not have hoped to keep up with the Americans in all areas of military competition.

Soviet actions following the U.S. rejection of the May 1955 plan offer further corroboration of Soviet interest in some measures of disarmament. In the wake of the failure to obtain Western agreement on mutual large-scale reductions in conventional forces, the Soviets reduced their army unilaterally. From 1955 through 1957, the USSR cut back its armed forces by an estimated 1.84 million men.³³ If the Soviets were willing to undertake such measures unilaterally, one assumes that they would have preferred to have the Western powers limit their forces as well. Some observers, such as Rostow, dispute this interpretation. They view the extensive demobilization of ground and tactical air forces as a sensible means to “modernize” the Soviet armed forces. From this perspective,

²⁹ “Rech’ tovarishcha G. K. Zhukova” [Speech of Comrade G. K. Zhukov], *Krasnaia zvezda*, February 21, 1955.

³⁰ Some systems had already been secretly deployed in Britain and with naval forces in the Mediterranean in the spring of 1952, but public attention was not drawn to these developments until the following year. See the discussion in Evangelista (fn. 24), 152, 225.

³¹ Matthew Evangelista, “The Evolution of the Soviet Tactical Air Forces,” *Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual* 7 (1982–1983), 451–79; M. A. Gareev, *Takhticheskie ucheniia i manevry* [Tactical exercises and maneuvers] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1977), 171–72, 189–90; and Vladimir Lavrinenkov, *Bez voiny* [Without war] (Kiev: Politizdat Ukrainy, 1982), 203.

³² Evangelista (fn. 24), chap. 5.

³³ Soviet figures given by Khrushchev in a speech, reprinted in *Pravda*, January 15, 1960, are generally accepted by Western analysts. See the extensive discussion in Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945–1970* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 162–66.

the troop reductions were entirely in the Soviet interest and should not be considered as concessions intended to demonstrate a new cooperative attitude toward disarmament.³⁴

The interpretation that the reductions did not hurt but rather benefited Soviet military capabilities apparently stems from the belief that nuclear weapons, especially tactical nuclear weapons, compensate for cuts in conventional forces. This "more bang for the buck" argument was widely promoted in the United States by the Eisenhower administration, although many prominent officers of the U.S. Army disagreed, starting with the Army Chief of Staff himself. In 1954 General Matthew Ridgway claimed that the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons "does not warrant the assumption that the need for soldiers will become less." "On the contrary," he argued, "there are indications that the trend will be in the opposite direction." He cited several reasons for needing more forces: the increased depth of the battlefield, the need for greater dispersion of forces, and the multiplication of maintenance and support facilities to supply large numbers of small mobile combat units.³⁵

Khrushchev put forward his own version of the "more bang for the buck" argument (often dubbed "more rubble for the ruble") to justify his unilateral troop cuts. But as in the American case, Khrushchev's reductions, and his rationale for them, met resistance from some sectors of the military from the start. Lieutenant General Krasil'nikov of the General Staff, for example, argued that the prospect of a nuclear battlefield "calls not for the reduction of the numbers of combatants, but for their logical further increase, since the threat of wiping out divisions grows, and large reserves will be needed for their replacement."³⁶ A number of Soviet military figures cited arguments by U.S. Generals Bradley, Collins, Ridgway, Taylor, and others to support a case for maintaining mass armies.³⁷

³⁴ Rostow (fn. 5), 20.

³⁵ Ridgway's remarks come from a speech delivered on September 9, 1954, quoted in Memorandum for Admiral Radford, Subject: Differing Philosophies, Generals Ridgway and Gruenther, September 11, 1954, p. 3, CJCS 092.2 North Atlantic Treaty, Modern Military Branch, National Archives. I am grateful to Charles Naef for calling this document to my attention. Ridgway expressed similar views in Congressional testimony, in an undated document, "Notes for Questions or Comment," Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 3, Folder: "Army—Testimony [by Gen. Ridgway] re Strength," Eisenhower Library. See also his autobiography, Matthew Ridgway, *Soldier* (New York: Harper, 1956). For similar views from other army officers, see Maxwell Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper, 1959), and James Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age* (New York: Harper, 1958), 139, 151, 229.

³⁶ S. Krasil'nikov, *Markšizm-Leninizm o voine i armii* [Marxism-Leninism on war and the army] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1956), 148, 150–51.

³⁷ See the discussion in Raymond L. Garthoff, *Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Praeger, 1958), 124–25.

Thus, from the standpoint of the Soviet military, the troop reductions were evidently not cost-free. In addition to their effect on military capability, the cuts also entailed problems of morale and dislocation, as hundreds of thousands of soldiers and officers were forced to reintegrate themselves into the civilian work force.³⁸ In carrying out the reductions, Khrushchev himself suffered a serious loss of political prestige and authority within the armed forces, as Soviet military memoirs make clear. Although military criticism of Khrushchev's reductions became particularly vocal following the announcement of a new round of cuts in 1960,³⁹ recent evidence attests to the demoralization and discontent engendered by even the initial reforms of the mid-1950s. A commander of an air defense division writes in his memoirs, for example, that the late 1950s were "a difficult time for us military people. We still hadn't managed to survive the first unilateral reduction of the Soviet armed forces when a second began. Some of us didn't take the so-called reforms very cheerfully. Sometimes it seemed that everything we had done up until then was now unnecessary."⁴⁰

It is tempting with hindsight to argue that the unilateral reductions do not shed any light on Soviet attitudes toward disarmament because they were the sensible and rational thing to do in any case. Yet developments in the post-Khrushchev period, and even up to the present, call this interpretation into question. There were disagreements at the time concerning the wisdom of downgrading the conventional forces (Khrushchev even went so far as to eliminate the position of commander in chief of the ground forces in September 1964), and many of Khrushchev's initiatives were reversed by his successors. The Brezhnev era saw a major buildup and modernization of conventional forces and a change in military doctrine that stressed preparation for a long conventional phase in a future East-West conflict and rejection of Khrushchev's "one-variant" (nuclear) war.⁴¹ The current Soviet debate over conventional forces and disarmament reinforces the impression that we should not consider Khrushchev's policy to have been the obvious or only course

³⁸ See Marshal Rodion Malinovskii's report in *Krasnaia zvezda*, January 20, 1960; for an extensive discussion, see Jutta Tiedtke, *Abrüstung in der Sowjetunion: Wirtschaftliche Bedingungen und soziale Folgen der Truppenreduzierung von 1960* [Disarmament in the Soviet Union: Economic conditions and social consequences of the troop reduction of 1960] (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1985), 157-79.

³⁹ Matthew Gallagher, "Military Manpower: A Case Study," *Problems of Communism* 13 (May-June 1964), 53-62; Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 238-42; Tiedtke (fn. 38), 54-62; Herbert Ritvo, "Internal Divisions on Disarmament in the USSR," in Seymour Melman, ed., *Disarmament: Its Politics and Economics* (Boston, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1962), 212-37.

⁴⁰ Lavrinenkov (fn. 31), 225.

⁴¹ Holloway (fn. 25), 39-43; Gallagher (fn. 39); Wolfe (fn. 33), *passim*.

for dealing with Soviet military issues at the time. Participants in today's debates interpret the Khrushchev reforms in light of their own policy preferences.⁴² Soviet proponents of unilateral initiatives of restraint argue that Khrushchev's reductions enhanced Soviet security by leading to "a rapid growth of the prestige and influence of the Soviet Union and the gradual improvement of the world situation," and that similar policies under Gorbachev have the same effect.⁴³ Opponents of unilateral restraint point to the demoralizing consequences of Khrushchev's reductions for the armed forces and argue that the policy was ill-advised on military grounds as well.⁴⁴ Such contemporary and retrospective disagreements among Soviet observers should make Western analysts cautious about interpreting Khrushchev's actions as obvious, necessary, or inevitable.

For a number of reasons, it seems apparent that Khrushchev did not view the reductions merely as a means to modernize the Soviet armed forces. Such a limited objective would hardly seem worth the risk of alienating important segments of the military. Contrary to Rostow's view, Khrushchev does appear to have hoped that the United States would view the reductions as a concession that would improve the prospects for a disarmament agreement. Some analysts believe that the Soviets sought specifically to trade their numerical strength in conventional forces for the growing U.S. advantages in tactical nuclear weaponry.⁴⁵ The Soviets evidently had economic motives as well—both for the reductions themselves and for further disarmament measures. In the transcript of his tape-recorded reminiscences, Khrushchev justified the cuts by associating them with his broader disarmament proposals: "To fight for disarmament or arms reductions at the time the Soviet Union had such an enormous army—no one would believe it."⁴⁶ That he was motivated by economic concerns is also evident from the transcript. His remarks about the reductions come directly after his statement that the United States was using the arms race to destroy the Soviet economy, "and by that means to obtain its goals even without war."⁴⁷ The unilateral reductions were supposed to inspire reciprocal Western measures, or at least serious negotiations, but they did neither.

⁴² R. Hyland Phillips and Jeffrey I. Sands, "Reasonable Sufficiency and Soviet Conventional Defense: A Research Note," *International Security* 13 (Fall 1988), 164–78.

⁴³ Vitaly Zhurkin, Sergei Karaganov, and Andrei Kortunov, "Reasonable Sufficiency; or, How to Break the Vicious Circle," *New Times*, October 12, 1987, 14.

⁴⁴ (General of the Army) Ivan Tret'iak, "Reliable Defense First and Foremost," *Moscow News*, February 21, 1988.

⁴⁵ Bloomfield et al. (fn. 2), esp. 85–86.

⁴⁶ Khrushchev transcript (fn. 26), 403–4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 403.

Although some retrospective accounts have been more skeptical, many U.S. officials during the 1950s recognized Soviet interest in negotiated measures of arms control. Indeed, their opposition to the 1955 plan stemmed from their belief that stopping the arms race would serve Soviet interests more than American ones, because the U.S. held a relative advantage in the development and production of modern weaponry and its economy was much larger than the Soviet one. This concern for how agreements affect the relative position of states, rather than their absolute welfare, is highlighted by Realist approaches to international cooperation.

U.S. OBJECTIVES

Even as the May 1955 meeting of the UN Disarmament Subcommittee was breaking up, James Wadsworth, the deputy U.S. representative, admitted that "to a measurable degree, the gaps between us seem to have been lessened."⁴⁸ Clearly, one could have predicted U.S. opposition to important aspects of the Soviet proposal, particularly, the prohibition on foreign military bases and the system of on-site inspection of airports, railroad junctions, and other potential military staging areas.⁴⁹ Most of the provisions, however, and even the language itself, were taken directly from previous Western texts. Yet the United States did not use the Soviet proposal as a basis for negotiation. Rather, the U.S. rejected it outright in favor of the Open Skies initiative.

In order to understand the U.S. position, one does not need to derive American interests deductively from evidence of military programs, economic concerns, and so forth, as in the Soviet case. Many of the relevant documents have now been declassified (although often with substantial deletions), so one can establish U.S. views more directly.

According to these documents, it seems clear that the United States was not interested in securing an agreement with the Soviets to reduce and eliminate nuclear and conventional arms. Most American officials evidently preferred the risk of an unconstrained arms race to any conceivable agreement that could be reached with the USSR. They were particularly skeptical that a disarmament accord could be adequately verified, and they believed, in any case, that U.S. security would be better served by an arms buildup. One gets this impression not only from the

⁴⁸ "Statement by the Deputy United States Representative on the Disarmament Subcommittee (Wadsworth), May 18, 1955," in *Documents on Disarmament* (fn. 2), 1:474.

⁴⁹ "Soviet Proposal Introduced in the Disarmament Subcommittee: Reduction of Armaments, the Prohibition of Atomic Weapons, and the Elimination of the Threat of a New War, May 10, 1955," *ibid.* 1:456-67.

internal discussions within the Eisenhower administration that followed the presentation of the Soviet disarmament plan; it had emerged as the dominant trend in U.S. thinking already in the Truman years.

The Truman administration's policy on disarmament was set forth in the document NSC 112, "Formulation of a United States Position with Respect to the Regulation, Limitation, and Balanced Reduction of Armed Forces and Armaments," approved on July 19, 1951. According to a later NSC progress report, "a principal thesis of NSC 112 was that attention should be kept focused, in any international discussions on disarmament, upon the problem of disclosure and verification, in order to test Soviet willingness to accept effective inspection." Even a Soviet rejection of the American proposals would, in the words of the report, be "advantageous to the U.S. for its propaganda value." The mandate of the UN Disarmament Commission, created by the General Assembly in January 1952, was broader than the issue of verification, however, and the rest of the members insisted that other aspects be discussed.⁵⁰ The U.S. government continued, nevertheless, to formulate disarmament proposals primarily for their impact on public opinion.

During the Truman administration the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) played an active role in evaluating U.S. disarmament policy for its propaganda value. The board, originally set up to coordinate "cold war strategy," was involved in numerous aspects of military and disarmament policy. Under the Eisenhower administration the PSB became known as the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) and was headed by C. D. Jackson, the president's "assistant for psychological warfare," in McGeorge Bundy's words.⁵¹ A number of declassified documents from the PSB and OCB files reinforce the impression that the U.S. government did not perceive disarmament as in its interest but continued to put forward proposals at the United Nations mainly for their effect on international public opinion. For example, in preparation for the first meeting of the UN Disarmament Commission, the PSB analyzed a draft of a speech to be delivered by Benjamin V. Cohen, the U.S. delegate. The board's analysts noticed in the speech "a veiled reference to a determination of the U.S. 'to correct the present unbalance' by rearming some of the less powerful nations . . . 'in Europe and Asia.'" They agreed that the U.S. goal should be rearmament rather than disarmament, but they

⁵⁰ National Security Council Progress Report on the implementation of "Formulation of a United States Position with Respect to the Regulation, Limitation, and Balanced Reduction of Armed Forces and Armaments" (NSC 112), January 19, 1953, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Folder: "NSC 112/1 Disarmament (6)," Eisenhower Library, p. 2.

⁵¹ Bundy (fn. 1), 290.

pointed out that "this would seem to open the way for effective counter-propaganda."⁵²

A subsequent review, commissioned by the State Department, also remarked on the tension between the dual goals of trying to present a favorable public image while resisting genuine disarmament measures. In April 1952, as the work of the UN Disarmament Commission began, a Panel of Consultants on Disarmament chaired by J. Robert Oppenheimer was appointed to help establish a U.S. policy on disarmament. Completed in January 1953, at the very end of the Truman administration, the report reaffirmed the major U.S. objective in the security field as rearmament rather than disarmament.⁵³ It referred to discussions in the UN commission as a "propaganda contest" and argued that the regulation of armaments "is very difficult—and for the moment at least it seems impossible."⁵⁴ The panel argued that "it is time for the United States to minimize its participation in the discussion of problems of disarmament in the United Nations," lest the public "reach the conclusion that the United States is cynical about disarmament and is trying merely to press for some propaganda advantage."⁵⁵

Despite these recommendations, the Eisenhower administration decided to continue presenting disarmament proposals before the United Nations, while conducting an interdepartmental review of U.S. policy.⁵⁶ The ongoing review drew attention to the same issues that had been raised by previous studies: pessimism about the possibility of adequate verification; ambivalence about disarmament itself; and an abiding interest in using the disarmament commission for public relations. Motivated by the latter objective, the U.S. supported a disarmament proposal put before the UN by the British and French on June 11, 1954. It envisioned successive stages of reductions in conventional forces and eventual elimination of nuclear forces. After initially rejecting the proposal, the

⁵² Memorandum, Irwin to Norbert, March 11, 1952, Subject: Proposed Cohen Disarmament Statement, Box 34, Folder 388.3, "Disarmament Proposal," Records of the Psychological Strategy Board, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO. For the previous history of U.S. proposals at the UN, see Memorandum: Disarmament Negotiations, October 24, 1956, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, OCB Series, Subject Subseries, Box 4, File: "Missile Program (2)," Eisenhower Library.

⁵³ "Armaments and American Policy," Report of a Panel of Consultants on Disarmament of the Department of State, January 1953, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Box 2, Folder: "NSC 112/1, Disarmament (6)," Eisenhower Library, esp. p. I-2. The panel consisted of Vannevar Bush, John S. Dickey, Allen W. Dulles, Joseph E. Johnson, and J. Robert Oppenheimer.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, I-4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, III-13.

⁵⁶ Memorandum: Disarmament Negotiations, October 24, 1956 (fn. 52).

Soviets agreed in the autumn of 1954 that it could serve as the basis for a draft international disarmament treaty.⁵⁷

The Soviet action focused the administration's attention on the question of whether to continue to endorse the Anglo-French proposal. Working groups from the State and Defense departments argued against: "Continued support of the UN Plan involves unacceptable risk to the U.S. and will be construed as hypocritical by our major allies."⁵⁸ Both the Department of Defense and the Atomic Energy Commission expressed doubt that any "technical means" could be devised to insure against Soviet cheating. In late 1954 the Defense Department and the AEC came out explicitly against the UN disarmament plan as "unfeasible and contrary to the security interests of the U.S." The State Department, although critical of the Anglo-French proposal, urged continued negotiations.⁵⁹

How could the U.S. government have supported a disarmament proposal that the three main departments concerned with national security had found threatening to U.S. interests? According to a paper prepared for the National Security Council, U.S. disarmament policy through the mid-1950s was formulated primarily for its effect on "public relations" without taking into account the possibility that the USSR might actually accept the West's proposals. The report stated that

consideration of this problem has been more often than not mainly stimulated by U.S. concern over Soviet maneuvers and tactics in the UN on the disarmament question; fear of Soviet proposals which might gain international support but be impossible for the U.S. to accept; concern over similar pressures from our allies; and a general desire to keep the initiative on the question in U.S. hands in a manner that will demonstrate to the free world our good record and basically peaceful and constructive intentions in this respect.⁶⁰

The Eisenhower administration, like its predecessor, could not agree

⁵⁷ The proposals are reprinted in *Documents on Disarmament* (fn. 2), vol. 1.

⁵⁸ "U.S. Policy on Control of Armaments: Agreements and Differences between the Positions Asserted by State and Defense Working Group Members on Principal Issues," with cover memorandum, December 10, 1954, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Box 2 Folder: "NSC 112/1 Disarmament (5)," Eisenhower Library, p. 3.

⁵⁹ T. B. Koons, "The Disarmament Problem and U.S. Policy before the NSC," April 22, 1955, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Special Assistant Series, Subject Subseries, Box 4, Folder: "Disarmament—General (1955-56) (3)," Eisenhower Library. The report includes an "annex" that puts forward the views of the AEC and the State and Defense departments, as well as a chronology of U.S. policy decisions on disarmament from 1953 to 1955.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

on anything beyond the public relations aspects of its disarmament policy. Unable to reconcile AEC and Defense Department opposition to the UN disarmament plan with the State Department's advocacy of continued negotiation, Eisenhower appointed Harold Stassen on March 19, 1955, as his special representative "to conduct on a fulltime basis a further review of U.S. policies on control of armaments." He also decided "in the interim period to continue support of the current United States position in the UN although providing for adjustments and emphasis."⁶¹ Soviet acceptance of the U.S.-approved UN plan on May 10, 1955, in effect called Eisenhower's bluff.

THE GAME OF DISARMAMENT

In game theoretic terms the 1955 negotiations on disarmament at the United Nations were an example of Deadlock rather than of Prisoners' Dilemma. Only one side, the USSR, was interested in the cooperative solution: a negotiated reduction of conventional and nuclear forces. The United States, by contrast, preferred mutual defection to mutual reductions in armaments: a continued arms race, rather than a negotiated halt. One might argue that the U.S. rejection of the Soviet proposal was merely a tactical move, a way of strengthening the U.S. bargaining position in anticipation of an eventual compromise settlement. The documentary evidence, however, casts considerable doubt on this interpretation. The internal reaction of the Eisenhower administration to the Soviet acceptance of the Anglo-French disarmament memorandum makes clear that the U.S. did not want such an agreement.

The Soviet demarche coincided with the completion of Governor Stassen's report on proposed U.S. disarmament policy. Unlike the Oppenheimer report of 1953, Stassen's study put forward a number of concrete proposals for mutually advantageous disarmament measures that could have formed the basis for compromise. He advocated "the cessation of all nuclear production, limited production of conventional weapons for replacement only, and no further expansion of foreign bases, para-military, or foreign stationed forces"; a halt to nuclear testing; prior notification of movement of armed forces; and extensive provision for on-site verification through an international armaments commission.⁶² In a break with previous policy, Stassen argued that "the best public rela-

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 3-4, and Annex A.

⁶² Progress Report, "Proposed Policy of the United States on the Question of Disarmament" (fn. 2), 17-20.

tions will flow from genuine negotiations on a realistic plan, rather than from unrealistic or over-dramatized presentations to the public.”⁶³

Stassen’s proposals were close enough to the Anglo-French memorandum and the Soviet plan to constitute an ideal starting point for negotiations aimed at a compromise agreement—a point that President Eisenhower himself made.⁶⁴ The Stassen plan would have addressed a number of Soviet concerns, in particular, the proliferation of U.S. bases abroad, nuclear testing, and German rearmament. Perhaps the major difference between the Stassen plan and the others is that the Stassen plan did not ban nuclear weapons. It froze them at current levels, which favored the United States, while implementing measures to lessen the threat of surprise attack. The verification regime as well differed from the one put forward by the USSR. It is not unreasonable to speculate, however, that the Soviets might have been willing to compromise on these issues.

The important point for the present discussion is that Stassen’s plan did not make it beyond the U.S. National Security Council, let alone to the United Nations. His proposals were sharply criticized, especially by the Pentagon, and ultimately rejected.

The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a memorandum commenting on the Stassen report, expressed precisely the position advocating Deadlock: “There is less risk to the security of the United States in the continuation of current armament trends than in entering into an international armaments limitation agreement.”⁶⁵ Charles Wilson, the secretary of defense, concurred with the position of the JCS and argued that “dealing with arms regulation in advance of the settlement of the major political issues causing international tensions is unrealistic and contrary to the best interests of our national security.” Rather than pursue arms control, the U.S. should maintain “basic military strength necessary and adequate to destroy the military power of any nation which seeks world conquest through military aggression.” Wilson expressed the view of the Defense Department that “deterrence by armed strength is our best real hope for peace.”⁶⁶ Evidently anticipating criticism, Wilson acknowledged that

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶⁴ Memorandum, July 1, 1955, Subject: Discussion at the 253rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, June 30, 1955, Eisenhower Papers, 1953–1961, Ann Whitman File, p. 10, Eisenhower Library.

⁶⁵ Memorandum for Secretary of Defense from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 16, 1955, Subject: Progress Report on the Control of Armaments Made to the President and the National Security Council by the Special Assistant to the President on May 26, 1955, Office of the Staff Secretary: Records, 1952–1961, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 11, Folder: “Disarmament [vol. I] (5),” p. 6, Eisenhower Library.

⁶⁶ Memorandum for the President from the Secretary of Defense, June 28, 1955, Subject:

"there is an impression that such a formula calls for an all-out arms race that would result eventually in economic disaster," but he dismissed the label of "arms race," as the JCS report did, on the grounds that the U.S. "is not allowing its military effort to be an intolerable drain on its technological, economic and manpower resources."⁶⁷ Yet the prescription was clear. In an NSC meeting held to discuss the Stassen report, President Eisenhower remarked to Arthur Radford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that "so far as he could see, Admiral Radford believed that the United States should proceed as at present in the arms race despite the fact that this was a mounting spiral towards war."⁶⁸

The president evidently recognized that his advisers favored defection rather than cooperation. If adequate verification were their only concern, one might be able to characterize the situation as a Prisoners' Dilemma: the U.S. would disarm if it could be sure the Soviets would do so as well. But Eisenhower's advisers did not want the U.S. to disarm; they often raised concerns about verification as a way to avoid admitting this basic fact. At an NSC meeting in June 1955 Secretary of State John Foster Dulles made the relationship explicit. He remarked that "Governor Stassen's present plan was one that best served the interests of the United States, since in essence it freezes our present nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union." He pointed out, however, that U.S. allies did not want to freeze armaments at current levels: "They want these armaments to be eliminated or at least reduced." Dulles wanted to avoid having the British and French "bring pressure upon us to make concessions which might result in a considerable weakening of the advantages which the Stassen plan in its original form would confer on the United States. Accordingly, Secretary Dulles recommended that heavy initial emphasis from now on be placed on the problem of inspection and policing." Dulles admitted, however, that the U.S. might find it difficult to agree even to a strictly verified disarmament accord: "We must understand what we are willing ourselves to accept. How will we react to a lot of Soviet representatives scattered throughout our industrial and military cen-

Progress Report on the Control of Armaments by the Special Assistant to the President on Disarmament, vols. I, II, and III, May 26, 1955, and vol. IV, June 23, 1955, Office of the Staff Secretary: Records, 1952-1961, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 11, Folder: "Disarmament [vol. I] (5)," pp. 1-2, 5, Eisenhower Library. Reagan administration officials in 1982 refused to declassify much of Wilson's memorandum, including the passages quoted above. It was finally released in full in July 1989 in response to my request under the mandatory classification review provisions of Executive Order 12356.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁶⁸ For some reason the rest of Eisenhower's comment has been exempted from declassification. Memorandum, July 1, 1955 (fn. 64), 9.

ters?"⁶⁹ Dulles raised the possibility that the U.S. might again feel obliged to reject its own proposal. Secretary Wilson, who opposed the proposal in any case, also rejected the stringent verification provisions that would be necessary to enforce it. Expressing doubts about Soviet willingness to countenance on-site inspection, he argued in a memorandum to Eisenhower that "even the United States would find such an invasion of our scientific and industrial privacy extremely disruptive of our economic system."⁷⁰

Ironically, a number of administration officials, including the president and the secretary of state, apparently realized that the USSR saw the situation in 1955 as a Prisoners' Dilemma and was trying to signal an interest in a cooperative solution. According to Dulles, "The Soviets had actually gone a long way to meet the British and French position on disarmament, without realizing that there was a very wide gap between the United States and the British and French on the issue of disarmament."⁷¹ On another occasion "Secretary Dulles said he believed that the Soviets genuinely wanted some reduction in the armament burdens in order to be able to deal more effectively with their severe internal problems. Accordingly, the Soviet Union may be prepared to make concessions."⁷² Eisenhower agreed.⁷³ Thus, unlike some observers, the two top U.S. foreign policy makers—the president and his secretary of state—both believed the Soviets seriously sought a negotiated arms-reduction agreement.

In the event, however, the Eisenhower administration fell back on the previous pattern of competing with the Soviets at the public relations level rather than negotiating in good faith. Harold Stassen's proposals were eviscerated, leaving nothing but his emphasis on preventing surprise attack. The Open Skies proposal that replaced Stassen's plan certainly made for good public relations, but it offered little room for compromise. For many U.S. officials, that was precisely the plan's attraction. Admiral Radford argued, for example, that Soviet acceptance of Open Skies would "give the U.S. a decided intelligence advantage," and rejection, "a decided public opinion advantage."⁷⁴ As many American participants had anticipated, the Soviets denounced the Eisenhower proposal

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁰ Memorandum for the President, July 28, 1955 (fn. 66), 6.

⁷¹ Memorandum, May 20, 1955, Subject: Discussion at the 249th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, May 19, 1955, Eisenhower Papers, 1953-1961, Ann Whitman File, p. 10, Eisenhower Library.

⁷² Memorandum July 1, 1955 (fn. 64), 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Bundy (fn. 1), 298.

as a deliberate attempt at espionage. The plan envisaged unrestricted overflights of each country's territory and the exchange of "blueprints" of military facilities. A U.S. diplomat who was present at the unveiling of the proposal remembers that "no one had any illusions that the Russians with their passion for secrecy would ever accept it."⁷⁵

In fact, the Open Skies proposal was not as nonnegotiable as some of its architects apparently hoped. The Soviets were willing to accept some of its features, but the U.S. was unwilling to compromise. After considerable hesitation, Khrushchev and his colleagues eventually offered to allow overflights several hundred miles into Warsaw Pact territory.⁷⁶ Khrushchev recalled the offer years later in retirement. His recollection of the goals of the negotiations accord with President Eisenhower's purpose—the prevention of surprise attack. As Khrushchev put it, "We agreed on the establishment of mutual inspection [*kontrol'*] at airdromes, in order not to create the possibility of mobilization and transport of troops in the necessary direction with the use of aviation."⁷⁷ Khrushchev's reminiscences suggest that the inspection bid was intended to produce an accord: "We made great concessions—we thought that this would lead to an agreement."⁷⁸ Yet, as with the rest of the disarmament negotiations of the period, "no understanding was found on this either and no agreement was reached."⁷⁹ Of course, one must be alert to possible distortions of a self-serving nature in such reminiscences, but most chroniclers of disarmament negotiations of this period believe that the Soviets were willing to accept some intrusive measures of inspection.⁸⁰ Furthermore, a number of U.S. officials at the time, most notably Harold Stassen, took Soviet inspection proposals seriously enough to recommend to the secretary of state that the U.S. propose an exchange of technical specialists to explore the feasibility of on-site verification.⁸¹ Nothing came of these suggestions, however, and, as Khrushchev correctly recalls, no progress was made on inspections or disarmament.

⁷⁵ Transcript of Oral History interview with Vernon Walters, conducted by John Wickham, April 21, 1970, Eisenhower Library, p. 42. See also the remarks of the deputy U.S. representative to the UN, James J. Wadsworth, *The Price of Peace* (New York: Praeger, 1962), xii.

⁷⁶ The proposal is reprinted in *Documents on Disarmament* (fn. 2), 1:721–29; and discussed in Bloomfield et al. (fn. 2), 29–30.

⁷⁷ Khrushchev transcript, 405–6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 405.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 405–6.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Bechhoefer (fn. 1), esp. chap. 13; Bloomfield et al. (fn. 2), esp. 82–84.

⁸¹ Letter from Harold E. Stassen to John Foster Dulles, August 5, 1955, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Special Assistant Series, Subject Subseries, Box 4, Folder: "Disarmament—General (1955–1956) (3)," Eisenhower Library.

WHY NOT TAKE YES FOR AN ANSWER

In retrospect, it seems clear that neither of the two competing strategies, Tit-for-Tat or GRIT, would have led to a disarmament agreement in the mid-1950s, but not for the reasons that analysts have put forward. Larson, for example, argues that the lack of a "shadow of the future" in Soviet-American relations of the early 1950s would have doomed a strategy of Tit-for-Tat to failure. Yet her argument that "there was little trade and no significant U.S.-Soviet collaboration" at the height of the cold war is irrelevant to the notion of the shadow of the future.⁸² If both countries had perceived themselves to be in a Prisoners' Dilemma situation, then the arms race itself would have cast a shadow on the future: both sides would have preferred the higher payoffs of the cooperative solution to the mutual defection that results from inability to secure and verify the other side's cooperation. Both sides would have had an incentive to strengthen measures of verification and move toward cooperation rather than continue to compete indefinitely in a series of mutual defections. The shadow of the future did not apply in 1955 because the U.S. did not perceive the situation as a Prisoners' Dilemma. The prospect of an arms race (a series of future mutual defections) was preferable to a negotiated solution and did not therefore provide any incentive for pursuing compromise on the Soviet disarmament plan. As Bundy put it, "What Dulles feared about proposals for disarmament in 1955 was simply that they might lead to agreement."⁸³

Contrary to what a GRIT analysis might contend, the 1955 negotiations did not fail as a result of hostility-induced misperception of the other side's intentions. Even John Foster Dulles, whose views of Soviet motives seemed impervious to change,⁸⁴ recognized the seriousness of Soviet disarmament proposals. While publicly the U.S. dismissed as propaganda such initiatives as the unilateral reductions in Soviet armed forces,⁸⁵ in closed NSC meetings Dulles argued that "the Soviets had effected a complete alteration of their policy. Their policy had been hard and was becoming soft." According to Dulles, the Soviets were seeking

⁸² Larson (fn. 9), 58.

⁸³ Bundy (fn. 1), 301.

⁸⁴ Ole R. Holsti, "Cognitive Dynamics and Images of the Enemy: Dulles and Russia," in David J. Finlay, Ole R. Holsti, and Richard R. Fagen, *Enemies in Politics* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967), 25-96; Larson (fn. 9).

⁸⁵ See, for example, the background press statement prepared by the President's Special Committee on Disarmament Problems, Joseph S. Toner, Executive Secretary, in response to the Soviet announcement of a second series of reductions, May 14, 1956, in Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 11, Folder: "Disarmament [vol. I] (6) [May-June 1956]," Eisenhower Library.

“some limitation on the arms race, some easing of the armaments burden. This they were seeking not merely as a trick, but because they could ill afford to sustain this burden.”⁸⁶

The U.S. refused to compromise on a disarmament agreement in the 1950s because in internal government deliberations the view prevailed that the potential risks—including the possibility of Soviet cheating—outweighed the benefits, for example, in terms of monetary savings. The main opponents of a U.S.-Soviet disarmament agreement—the U.S. military—did not have the same misgivings about an arms race as Dulles believed the Soviets had. Indeed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff rejected the very term “arms race,” because it “lends an impression that the United States is seriously straining itself to keep pace with the Soviets in this field.” The JCS recognized the possibility of a shadow of the future, but they remained complacent:

The United States and its Allies have, as a matter of policy, endeavored to set a level of forces and armament expenditures which can be maintained over the long term, with due consideration for economic and other factors which affect the well-being of their people. . . . However, should the necessity arise and were the United States truly to embark on an arms race, its armaments output could be increased many fold—well beyond that of the Communist Bloc.⁸⁷

IMPLICATIONS

The disarmament negotiations of the mid-1950s contain a number of remarkable parallels to the situation of the late 1980s. The Soviet leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev appears to have pursued a GRIT strategy much like the one that, as Larson argues, Nikita Khrushchev followed in the 1950s. Even the details of the Soviet initiatives and proposals are similar. Gorbachev, like Khrushchev, announced a significant unilateral cut in conventional forces.⁸⁸ His suggestions for negotiated reductions are in many respects close to the May 1955 plan. In May 1989, for example, Gorbachev handed U.S. Secretary of State James Baker a proposal for reductions in NATO and Warsaw Pact forces down to 1.35 mil-

⁸⁶ Memorandum, May 20, 1955 (fn. 71), 7–9.

⁸⁷ Memorandum for Secretary of Defense from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 16, 1955 (fn. 65), 3.

⁸⁸ Bill Keller, “Gorbachev Vows Major Military Cutback and a ‘Clearly Defensive’ Stand in Europe,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1988; R. Jeffrey Smith and George C. Wilson, “Decision Welcomed in U.S.,” *Washington Post*, December 8, 1988.

lion troops per alliance.⁸⁹ As with the 1955 proposal, the new offer would entail highly asymmetric reductions on the Soviet side. As in 1955, the Soviet proposal adopted much of the Western negotiating position; and, despite the record of previous Soviet initiatives, this one also seemed to take the West by surprise.⁹⁰ In a most uncanny parallel, the Bush administration responded to the Soviet proposal with a call for aerial overflight inspections of the territory of the two sides: a latter-day Open Skies, explicitly described as such.⁹¹ In 1955 the possibility of Soviet acceptance of the verification procedures proposed by the West led Secretary Dulles to wonder whether the United States would have to reject its own proposals rather than allow Soviet inspectors extensive access to U.S. military facilities.⁹² Soviet willingness since the late 1980s to countenance intrusive on-site inspection to secure arms limitations has again led some in the U.S. national security community to get cold feet on the question of verification.⁹³

One promising difference between the current situation and that of the mid-1950s is that the U.S. has begun to take Soviet proposals seriously. Unlike the unilateral conventional reductions of the 1950s, for example, the cuts Gorbachev announced in December 1988 are widely interpreted to decrease Soviet military capability, especially for a short-warning attack.⁹⁴ Although President Bush has resisted Soviet calls for further nuclear reductions in Europe, he has put forward serious counterproposals on conventional forces, despite the reluctance of some sectors of the U.S. military.⁹⁵ If both sides pursue a compromise solution, the opportunity for lessening the burden of the arms race will not be lost as many argue it was in 1955.

Such historical parallels as these might by themselves justify undertaking a case study of the May 1955 disarmament proposal. Equally important, however, are the theoretical implications one can draw from the

⁸⁹ Thomas L. Friedman, "Gorbachev Hands a Surprised Baker an Arms Proposal," *New York Times*, May 12, 1989.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Maureen Dowd, "Bush Voices Hope on Soviet Change, but with Caution," *New York Times*, May 13, 1989.

⁹² Memorandum, July 1, 1955 (fn. 64), 11.

⁹³ The U.S. Navy, in particular, has resisted intrusive verification to distinguish nuclear from conventional cruise missiles.

⁹⁴ U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, *Gorbachev's Force Reductions and the Restructuring of Soviet Forces*. Hearings before the Defense Policy Panel, May 10 and 14, 1989.

⁹⁵ For details of the proposals, see Chalmers Hardenbergh, ed., *The Arms Control Reporter* (Brookline, MA: Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, monthly compendium), supplements for 1989 and 1990.

case. In particular, the case sheds light on the debate over Tit-for-Tat versus GRIT as strategies for achieving cooperation and over the nature of the Soviet-American arms race.

This study of the 1955 proposal supports the position that Prisoners' Dilemma is not always an accurate characterization of the superpower arms race. As Downs and Rocke point out, "Any single race that goes on for a significant length of time is probably best represented by an assortment of games."⁹⁶ The evidence from this case calls into question their assumption that the "Soviet Union during the 1950s" held preferences "that were more characteristic of the game Deadlock than of Prisoners' Dilemma." After Stalin's death in 1953 the Soviet leaders carried out unilateral reductions in conventional forces that they would have preferred to institute as part of a reciprocal agreement. In this sense they preferred unilateral "cooperation" over mutual defection. By contrast, the declassified documentary evidence presented here indicates that the U.S. preferred mutual defection over mutual cooperation, and was happy to see the USSR undertake unilateral restraint. It was the U.S. rather than the USSR that was playing Deadlock in the 1950s.

This study reinforces criticisms of game theoretic approaches that posit the state as a unitary actor. Both Gowa and Larson, for example, question a Tit-for-Tat strategy on those grounds. The 1955 case also suggests that Downs et al. are right to emphasize that internal preferences for arming (whether for bureaucratic and economic reasons, or out of a commitment to superiority) can shift a state's preferences from Prisoners' Dilemma to Deadlock.⁹⁷ Such internal preferences for arming, especially on the part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Atomic Energy Commission, seemed especially to characterize U.S. policy in the 1950s.

This case supports the importance of a "second-image" analysis of arms races—one that pays attention to such substate actors as the JCS and the AEC; but it calls into question the emphasis that proponents of GRIT place on "first-image" factors, that is, individual cognitive psychological impediments to cooperation. The now-standard example of such misperception leading to defection is the attitude of John Foster Dulles toward the Soviet Union. Analysts as different in methodological approach as Larson and Downs have accepted Ole Holsti's contention that Dulles misperceived Soviet interest in cooperative efforts to slow the arms race because his ideological preconceptions prevented him from

⁹⁶ George W. Downs and David M. Rocke, "Tacit Bargaining and Arms Control," *World Politics* 39 (April 1987), 297-325, at 301.

⁹⁷ Downs et al. (fn. 10), 122-23.

objectively interpreting Soviet actions.⁹⁸ As Downs and Rocke write, "One can scarcely imagine what set of conciliatory gestures could have convinced John Foster Dulles that the Soviets were interested in genuine detente in 1956."⁹⁹ Yet, based on the declassified notes from NSC meetings, we now know that Dulles already in 1955 recognized that the Soviets had, in his words, "effected a complete alteration of their policy" and were genuinely interested in improving relations and curbing the arms race. Indeed, he predicted that the "Iron Curtain is going to disappear. In the future there will be no more sharp line between the free world and the Soviet bloc."¹⁰⁰ Although Holsti is right to argue that Dulles explained the Soviet shift in policy as a result of internal (and imperial) economic difficulties,¹⁰¹ that does not mean that the secretary of state dismissed the shift as insignificant or that he was totally against any U.S. reciprocation of Soviet gestures.¹⁰²

The main opposition to reciprocation and cooperation came primarily from the military. During the 1950s the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, to some extent, the Atomic Energy Commission exercised effective veto power over U.S. disarmament policy. Their efforts were most evident in the internal U.S. debate over the merits of a nuclear test ban. Eisenhower seemed strongly inclined to accept the Soviet offer to negotiate a ban, but his efforts to achieve a test ban treaty were thwarted by opposition from the JCS and the nuclear weapons laboratories. Eisenhower deferred to their concerns about verifiability, even though he thought they were exaggerated.¹⁰³ An interesting counterpoint is President Kennedy's successful effort to get the Joint Chiefs (and the AEC) to approve the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963, despite their last-minute objections.¹⁰⁴

If we accept the influence of internal, domestic "second-image" factors on the prospects for Soviet-American security cooperation, we still need to understand the conditions under which such factors impede or enhance the likelihood of agreement. Why are the Joint Chiefs of Staff able at some points to exercise veto power over disarmament agreements and

⁹⁸ Larson (fn. 9), 36-39; Downs et al. (fn. 10), 136-37.

⁹⁹ Downs and Rocke (fn. 96), 305.

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum, May 20, 1955 (fn. 71), 7-9.

¹⁰¹ Holsti (fn. 84), esp. 66-69.

¹⁰² For example, contrast Dulles's views with those of the Defense Department in Memorandum of July 1, 1955 (fn. 64), 5-7, and Annex A of memorandum from T. B. Koons, April 22, 1955 (fn. 59).

¹⁰³ Robert A. Divine, *Blowing on the Wind: The Nuclear Test Ban Debate, 1954-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

¹⁰⁴ Glenn T. Seaborg, with Benjamin S. Loeb, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Test Ban* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), esp. 228-29.

at other times not? On the Soviet side, does economic stringency and the prospect of falling further behind in the arms race always lead to initiatives aimed at reducing international tensions, or must there be a coalition in power that favors such initiatives for other reasons?¹⁰⁵ It may be possible to relate such questions systematically to game theoretic metaphors, if that seems useful. We may seek, for example, to identify not only the conditions under which a particular game—for example, Deadlock versus Prisoners' Dilemma—reflects a given interaction but also the conditions under which a particular strategy—say, Tit-for-Tat versus GRIT—will succeed or fail. It may be that certain domestic configurations or coalitions are more likely to initiate GRIT strategies, whereas others will at best respond to a cooperative Tit-for-Tat move, and yet others will under no circumstances reciprocate a cooperative gesture. Perhaps the most promising approach for future research in this area of international relations is to try to relate game theory metaphors to the actual dynamics of domestic political determinants of foreign policy.¹⁰⁶ Such an approach would serve both “to investigate the empirical correctness” of game theory’s analytical predictions¹⁰⁷ and to evaluate the theory’s usefulness for understanding the sources of and barriers to international security cooperation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ For an insightful analysis of the domestic determinants of Soviet policy, see Jack Snyder, “The Gorbachev Revolution: A Waning of Soviet Expansionism?” *International Security* 12 (Winter 1987–1988), 93–131.

¹⁰⁶ Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization* 42 (Summer 1988), 427–60; Robert Axelrod, “The Gamma Paradigm for Studying the Domestic Influence on Foreign Policy” (Paper presented at the 1987 Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Washington, DC). For an interesting study of Soviet policy that draws on game theory, see Christer Jönsson, *Soviet Bargaining Behavior: The Nuclear Test Ban Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

¹⁰⁷ As recommended, e.g., by Duncan Snidal, “The Game Theory of International Politics,” *World Politics* 38 (October 1985), 25–57, at 26–27.

¹⁰⁸ For a review of theories relevant to security cooperation and a preliminary empirical assessment, see Matthew Evangelista, “Sources of Moderation in Soviet Security Policy,” in Philip Tetlock et al., *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).