

## Striking the balance

### Levelling up or levelling down?

In arms control negotiations it may seem easier to set high ceilings than low ceilings. Perhaps there was something of this in the SALT process of the 1970s. That does not, however, appear to be the process now underway in Geneva. SALT, or Strategic Arms *Limitation* Talks, has been overtaken by START — Strategic Arms *Reduction* Talks. It is of no small significance that both sides are working toward 50 percent reductions in strategic arms. What we see now is not a levelling up, but a potential levelling down, process. So too with intermediate-range nuclear arms.

The negotiators must be vigilant; reductions by themselves do not necessarily enhance stability. An arms control agreement must not permit one side to circumvent the intended effect of the treaty through cheating, or with unconstrained systems. For example, in considering an agreement on long-range missiles in Europe, NATO must be awake to the Soviet shorter-range INF forces, should they provide the Soviet Union with much the same target coverage as the SS-20.

On the other side of the stability equation is the security that comes from the maintenance of credible forces in sufficient numbers, and appropriately deployed to deter aggression; but, of course, this goal imposes a financial burden. Nations assume many burdens: national economic and social development, international relief and development assistance, and so on. These are not either/or situations; governments must meet many needs simultaneously. Among these must be national defence, to preserve our peace and freedom — by deterring the outbreak or threat of war. Of course in an ideal world, a world where mistrust did not exist, it might be possible to imagine the absence of arms, with all the national resources devoted to building, rather than some of them directed to protecting. We live, however, in a world of imperfect selves, imperfect nations and imperfect relations among nations. Accordingly, we need to protect our national interests; these include peace with freedom for our people.

### Paradoxes of the nuclear peace

Nuclear weapons have introduced a new level of concern in the calculation of strategic stability. No one denies that the destructive potential of nuclear arms is enormous. Fear of the destructive potential of nuclear weapons has been the major restraint against their use. *The Economist* magazine in a feature some months ago entitled "The Long Nuclear Peace," said that the past forty-one years suggest that nuclear weapons are not only a deterrent against other nuclear weapons but also they are a way of discouraging any sort of war from starting.

The understanding of the role of nuclear arms in maintaining peace is complicated by a number of paradoxes. First, while everyone would strongly prefer reaching a situation where nuclear arms safely could be abolished, we still could never fail to continue to take them into account. They cannot be disinvented, the knowledge of how to create them would always exist. Consequently, so long as mistrust existed between nations, the threat of nuclear weapons would be a factor to consider.

A second paradox is that while nuclear weapons are disturbing to the public mind, they are, nevertheless, prob-

ably the least obtrusive, or the least visible, of weapons. Our television screens are crowded with images of violence and devastation from the use of conventional weapons. Vastly more resources go into conventional arms than nuclear. In all the wars that have scarred the earth since 1945 nuclear weapons have not been used.

### Cooperate or perish

Another paradox resides in the fact that nations which are in apparent competition, with different political, economic and social systems must, nevertheless, cooperate with one another to keep the peace in a nuclear age. Failure to cooperate is too dangerous. Similarly, the security relationship is so closely interwoven that there is little room for unilateral action. What one does, by its nature affects the other. If the Soviet Union continues a massive build-up of arms at all levels, then the West must take appropriate steps to redress the balance, in order to continue to ensure that its security is not imperilled. If the United States talks about the possibility of shifting the balance between offensive and defensive systems, then, of course, the Soviet Union must pay attention.

Perhaps the greatest paradox of all is in the role of nuclear weapons themselves. For, in spite of the enormous destructive potential of nuclear arms, their primary purpose is served if they do not have to be used at all. NATO seeks, through the maintenance of credible forces, to *deter* war by convincing a potential opponent that attack, or the threat of attack, at any level, simply would not be worth its while. The risks involved in initiating or conducting war would be greater than the hoped for benefits. To be effective, however, deterrent forces must be credible because no one would be deterred by obsolete, vulnerable or inadequate forces. Therefore, the maintenance of this great paradox through an effective force posture is important.

### What it means for Canada

Where then does Canada fit into this picture? Canada of course has no nuclear roles. We do, however, rely on the collective strength and influence of the North Atlantic Alliance to guarantee our security. Accordingly, we accept the risks and responsibilities, along with the benefits, of collective security arrangements. If Canada were to go it alone, we would still need to defend ourselves if we were to assure both peace and freedom. The task and costs would then be very much greater, and the desired outcome very much less sure. Further, Canada's contribution to collective deterrence and defence gives us an opportunity to influence the development of other security measures. In the arms control area, to cite one example, we are partners in NATO consultations on nuclear arms control.

In the preamble to the North Atlantic Treaty the member nations "reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments. They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and wellbeing in the North Atlantic area. They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security." NATO's functions therefore include