

fostered the notion that nuclear weapons could be used and therefore would be.

But the paradoxes went further. Despite, and indeed perhaps because of, all their efforts to enhance the war fighting capabilities of their strategic nuclear arsenals, the nature of the weapons could not easily be ignored. There were few illusions on either side of the catastrophic risks that would attend the execution of nuclear war plans, which served to reinforce mutual deterrence. As Bernard Brodie observed: "It is the curious paradox of our time that one of the foremost factors making deterrence really work, and work well, is the lurking fear that in some massive crisis it might fail. Under these circumstances, one does not tempt fate."<sup>51</sup>

To a certain extent the paradoxes of nuclear weapons made arms control possible, even while they restricted its scope. Quantitative limits were feasible, although qualitative improvements were continually sought, because numbers alone did not necessarily confirm advantages. The disutility of nuclear weapons in many conflict scenarios may have contributed to efforts to curb proliferation through the NPT process.

In the Cold War the role of strategic nuclear arms control between the superpowers, and to a certain extent general efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons through the NPT process, "was to confirm an international power structure. For this reason, agreements tended toward a general counting exercise."<sup>52</sup> Moreover, what could be counted by national technical means or by agreements allowing for on-site inspection, were amenable to arms control where the political will existed to reach bilateral or multilateral agreements. Not surprisingly, attempts to limit conventional weaponry were impeded in part because of the difficulties associated with verification.

As the Cold War came to an end, arms control negotiation and verification entered a new phase. Real reductions in superpower weapons were now possible because of the changed international strategic environment. But it was how that environment changed that really accounted for both the pace and character of the new arms control measures.

The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty eliminated a whole class of weapons on both sides of the European divide, but went a long way to achieving the NATO objective of removing the strategic and political threat posed by the Soviet SS-20s while leaving the Alliance with adequate theatre capabilities. Most importantly, the on-site verification measures of the Treaty not only gave it credibility, but clearly showed that the Soviets were abandoning their traditional aversion to intrusive measures. Moscow had to reduce defence spending and seek more stability as a result of domestic weaknesses that needed to be addressed.

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<sup>51</sup> Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 430-1.

<sup>52</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "The Revolution in Strategic Affairs," *Adelphi Paper* (318) (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1998), p. 70.