

# Arms, arms control and security

by Lorne E. Green

We feel reassured when we see an ongoing political dialogue between East and West, and when our leaders shun cold war rhetoric. The world seems a safer, more secure place if Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev are talking, or if arms control negotiations are going on. By the same token, when the dialogue looks like drying up or running into difficulties, as when the Russians walked away from the Geneva negotiations in 1983, or when the first news reports from the Reykjavik summit sounded gloomy, we become concerned. It is noteworthy, then, that the Russians and the Americans have been stressing since Reykjavik that the arms control dialogue will go on — as indeed it has done.

It is often said that people in the Western democracies are impatient. Some explanation for this may be found in democratic government itself. If we are dissatisfied with the conduct of our affairs, then we have the opportunity, and hence the expectation, of rapid change. Because we are a society which encourages free choice, we tend to be intolerant of social injustice, we are impatient for cures for disease, and we expect our security as a people enjoying both peace and freedom to be upheld.

## Price of impatience

This passion for early results can, however, complicate the conduct of arms control negotiations with the East. Complex issues of strategic stability are not given to quick or simple solutions, especially with the technological sophistication of today's arms. Our tendency to impatience, our frustration when things do not seem to be going well, can be played on by those with whom the West negotiates in order to put pressure on our governments and their negotiators. This is sometimes known as public diplomacy, public information or propaganda. The opportunities for this are much greater in open societies.

Would a superpower agreement to reduce their nuclear arsenals herald a new age in East-West relations? Would the problems of a divided Europe, regional differences, and the differing political, economic and social views of the world seem any less intractable? There can be no doubt that substantial arms control agreements can help mightily — but they cannot shoulder all the weight of East-West relations.

## Striking the balance

Arms control must take its place, along with defence efforts, as part of security policy. They both must be directed towards stability. National or international security cannot be assured in the absence of balance — balance in

arms control and in the defence postures of East and West. We cannot cede a potentially destabilizing advantage to the other side through inadequate arms control agreements, or an inadequate defence; to do so would imperil our security.

A stable balance of forces can be more than a deterrent to the outbreak of war, or to the threat of such. Balance, and the desire to preserve it, can help to bring governments to the negotiating table and to strengthen their resolve to settle disputes by peaceful means.

The question then revolves around the level at which the balance should be struck. Certainly Canada, and NATO, as a defensive alliance, do not want more than the minimum forces necessary to maintain both peace and freedom. In fact, NATO has taken a number of measures in recent years to ensure that it does not retain more than it needs. This activity does not get the recognition it deserves. In 1979, when the decision was taken on long-range missile deployment and arms control, 1,000 nuclear weapons were removed from Europe. A further 572 weapons are being removed as 572 ground-launched cruise and Pershing II missiles are deployed. In October 1983 NATO Ministers at Montebello, Quebec, decided to reduce NATO's nuclear stockpile in Europe by a further 1,400 weapons. But this sort of unilateral arms control is not sufficient. There must be negotiated agreements that are equitable, balanced and verifiable to assure both sides that their security is not imperilled. The pursuit of enhanced security at a lower level of armaments is the aim of arms control. The essential criterion is stability.

Force postures are based on a nation's, or an alliance's, calculations of what will best serve its interests. No nation or alliance can afford to engage in competition for competition's sake. For instance, in strategic forces, the Soviet Union has chosen to put great emphasis on its land-based missiles, while the United States has put more emphasis on its sea-launched missiles. According to a recent table in *The New York Times*, the Soviet Union has 6,420 warheads on land-based missiles, compared to 2,100 for the United States. The same table shows, on the other hand, 5,760 warheads on United States sea-launched missiles, compared to 2,800 for the Soviet Union. These force postures result from conscious choices based on a calculation of needs, costs and benefits.

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