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I believe that such a raising of the nuclear threshold in Europe is a concept of the first importance. It would not be an easy, or an inexpensive task. But even as I am attracted to this concept in its application to Europe, I am troubled by a broader implication. Non-nuclear weapons are in an advanced state of technology, and are widely marketed. Sea-skimming missiles, laser-guided bombs and fragmentation weapons are available for distribution. Is it the purpose of nuclear arms control to make the world safe for conventional warfare?

Surely a basic term is missing in this equation: it is the encouragement of an equilibrium of conventional arms and forces, balanced at lower rather than higher levels. An agreed framework of conventional deterrence against armed aggression — but significantly reducing any dangerous concentration of forces.

This is to some extent the task of the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks [MBFR] in Vienna. But those talks will not succeed unless their importance in terms of military strategy is developed within a wider framework of East-West confidence and political will.

Let me suggest a further example of our difficulty in understanding a time which appears to be out of joint. A moment ago I used the word interdependence. It is the accepted description of the world as we know it. We think it describes a rational and positive condition, an ethic to be encouraged. But we are also learning that the consequences of interdependence are frequently unforeseen, often irrational, negative, and out of control — rogue trends which promote inequality among states, and deep strains between them.

If we have difficulty understanding the intricacies of interdependence, we are not yet even close to managing the economic linkages with peace and security.

Consider Poland. Its economic collapse strongly suggested action to assist. Western banks were deeply exposed. There seemed to be a common interest in the renewed viability of the Polish economy. But the overriding political considerations, in light of the brutal declaration of martial law, pointed in quite the opposite direction.

Thus, the debate over East-West economic relations — which haunts every Western council — reveals the fundamental and unresolved question of how much economic interdependence is desirable between the two systems. Some say less. Some say more. Those who argue for less are often, paradoxically, the first to advocate the punitive merit of economic sanctions — which are only effective if interdependence exists, and if Soviet behaviour is modified by the expectation of economic benefit. Moreover, some who argue for economic sanctions in the civilian sector apparently believe that this will influence Soviet military spending. Yet they may add that there is little if any relationship between civilian and military economies in the Soviet Union.

This particular debate tends also to lay open one of the most gaping self-inflicted wounds of the current period. That is the unfortunate tendency for a discussion which starts off about East-West relations to wind up in the fratricide of West-West relations. There have been days when I, or Ronald Reagan, or Margaret Thatcher may seem to have been accused, for whatever reason or passion of the moment, of posing a greater threat to the security of the West than do the Russians and their associates.

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