

nuclear war."¹ The premise here is that the escalation of nuclear war can be controlled and limited, perhaps to the European "theatre." The idea that a nuclear war could be controlled ("controlled escalation") with a view to prevailing is perhaps the biggest fallacy of all. The theoretical assumptions and much of the technology of the immensely complex military establishments of both sides have never been proven by performance. No one really knows, for instance, if the nuclear missiles aimed over the North Pole are accurately targetted since all tests on both sides have been done on east-west trajectories. Then there is the electro-magnetic pulse (EMP) phenomenon. Studies indicate that a single nuclear detonation in outer space over continental U.S. could short circuit most of the country's power grid, and damage virtually any sensitive electronic instrument, including those of the command, control and communications system of the U.S. military itself. Can there be any rational possibility of "control," during a protracted war, in the face of such radical uncertainties?

From all of the above, we must draw the obvious conclusion: the arms race on each side has become detached from any functional consideration of the actual usefulness of nuclear weapons in the event of war, *and detached also from true concern for the real requirements of security.* Why is this happening?

1. The deployment of weapons is used as a kind of ritual display of resolve and anger. The arms race becomes a medium for diplomatic signalling. The Soviets invade Afghanistan, so the U.S. retaliates by not ratifying SALT 2 and deploying new missiles in Europe.
2. The superpowers attach psychological significance to the size of their arsenals, ascribing prestige and intimidation value to a straight count of arithmetic quantities--again divorced from any consideration of what the numbers really mean in military terms.
3. There are institutional imperatives on both sides to deploy new technologies once they are developed, perhaps to justify the investment, perhaps to placate the vested interest groups that develop along with any technology.

All of these factors (most of which are common to varying degrees on both sides, as we have noted) not only drive the arms race, they put the brake on the arms control process. One side accuses the other of pursuing a theoretical first-strike capability, as though that were a meaningful possibility. The other side throws up the need for 100 per cent fool-proof verification on the grounds that cheating would lead to a unilateral advantage, as though such a hypothetical advantage, too, was a meaningful possibility.

¹ Theodore Draper, "Dear Mr. Weinberger: An Open Reply to an Open Letter," New York Review of Books, Nov. 4, 1982, p. 26.