

In the end, successful arms control and disarmament measures depend on a real intention to keep the arms lid on. This is hardly a revelation, but it is a truth we should constantly remind ourselves of as we, in fora of this kind, debate the issues of arms control and disarmament. As Prime Minister Trudeau pointed out in a speech in Guelph, Ontario on October 27, "We may at some point be able to freeze the nuclear capability in the world at greatly reduced levels. But how do we freeze the menacing intentions which might control those weapons which remain? Therein lies the inadequacy of the nuclear freeze argument."

Here we get to the core of the current debate: the unsteady relations that have divided East and West over the years and the absence of real political dialogue that could ease tensions. There had been a time in the seventies when détente brought the promise of such dialogue. Regular consultations at the most senior levels of political leadership appeared to offer the way to developing understanding, mutual respect and a willingness to search for ways of avoiding crises. As détente became divisible and subject to doubt, the prospect it offered of building confidence in the intentions of each side faded.

In today's atmosphere of suspicion and distrust, how can we help in restoring the confidence which might move things forward? At Guelph, Prime Minister Trudeau referred to a "strategy of political confidence-building" which would involve "Steps that reduce tensions caused by uncertainty about objectives, or caused by fear of the consequences of failure; Steps that mitigate hostility and promote a modicum of mutual respect; Steps that build an authentic confidence in man's ability to survive on this planet." He particularly had in mind regular high-level dialogue based on openness regarding intentions, mutual respect, reciprocal acknowledgement of legitimate security needs, a determined approach to crisis management and incentives for flexibility. The objective would be to establish a better communications network between the two superpowers and the East and West generally.

The burden of this strategy rests with the political leadership in each country who alone, perhaps, can show the flexibility needed to explore new policy directions. Prime Minister Trudeau has already begun the high-level consultations he has advocated and will soon be personally meeting other leaders.