The Relationship Between Defense and Arms Control

By

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I am pleased to keynote this important conference, centered on the relationship between defense and arms control. It is a topic of deep interest to me, and one that may well decide whether we succeed or fail in addressing many of the likeliest security challenges ahead.

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The old way of thinking has it that arms control and defense are opposites—that arms control takes away or limits commanders' options. It is surely possible to caricature arms control along those lines—especially playing off those who treat arms control as an end in itself, a noble, selfless, moral thing to do. But none of that fairly describes arms control's true purpose and role. And I insist that in the changing security environment, arms controllers and defense planners both must do better at seeing their work as a collaboration.

In fact, the fundamental purposes of arms control and defense are exactly the same: to make us safer. Defense deters or defeats threats; arms control can avert them more quietly. It seeks first of all to limit the *adversary's* options, to take weapons out of *hostile* hands.

Of course, arms control generally is not a matter of simply waiting for the other side to give up weapons you would rather it didn't have. It is negotiation. So we have to accept limits on our own forces as well. That doesn't change the call, but only makes it closer. Considering all costs and benefits, each proposed agreement must net us more security; otherwise don't do it.

Incidentally, I would exclude from that calculus the stock argument of those who don't like arms control—exercised most recently in the debate over the Chemical Weapons Convention—that arms control will "lull us to sleep," and cause us to neglect our defenses. I do not believe we should go to sleep now that the CWC is in force. But I also suggest that the "lull us to sleep" argument is anti-security. It would expose the American people and American forces to avoidable dangers—just so we'll have an incentive to heighten our guard. The world is too dangerous to indulge such folly.

But by rational measures, we've seen that the arms control and nonproliferation agreements in force today clearly do increase our net safety. Quite often, as in the CWC and the Biological Weapons Convention, they ban weapons we don't want for ourselves anyway. In other cases, as in START and the NPT, they protect our basic defense requirements, while answering serious security concerns.

Russia's SS-18 missiles, for example, are the most devastating arms ever pointed our way. A weapon system designed to defeat them would, *optimistically*, cost many billions of dollars, and could do so only in the midst of a nuclear war, after our nuclear arsenal would have failed its prime, deterrent mission—and when any glitch would be catastrophic. But under the START

treaties, every last one of those missiles is on its way to extinction—certainly, verifiably, and without a shot being fired.

Also consider that aggressor and rogue states see weapons of mass destruction as equalizers—perhaps even nullifiers—of conventional military power. In the Gulf War, for example, Iraq's military was decimated by the superior conventional forces of the United States and our coalition partners. But had Saddam Hussein been successful in acquiring—or using—nuclear weapons, our planning and execution scenarios would have been dramatically different. For us, unquestionably the world's preeminent *conventional* military power, the lesson is that our security is enhanced whenever we can keep weapons of mass destruction out of the picture.

So we should treat arms control as a hard-headed national security mission—one aptly described as "preventive defense."

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Against that backdrop, let me note the role of arms control in dealing with some of the most prominent existing and emerging international dangers.

Despite the Cold War's end, Russia remains the one country that could inflict overwhelming nuclear devastation on the United States. We have a great deal of unfinished business there.

Indeed, we have only begun to reap the START treaties' benefits by actually removing thousands of weapons systems. Ukraine, Kazakstan and Belarus are now nonnuclear, but we still have some five years of hard work ahead on implementing START I—verifying that missiles are sliced apart and silos are filled in, and negotiating over Treaty interpretation and compliance.

And before START II can complete a two-thirds reduction in arsenals, and eliminate the last of those SS-18 missiles, it still has to be ratified in Russia—where, as you know, there is considerable resistance. A number of Duma members have complained that START II will require Russia to eliminate multiple warhead missiles, and then build new single warhead missiles in order to maintain parity with us.

They need to focus on Russia's realistic options. *Without* START II, the United States is legally obliged by Congress to maintain START I force levels of 6,000 accountable weapons, which actually translates into some 8,500 warheads, given the counting rules. Russia could match that only at ruinous expense. But *with* START II, Russia will have actual parity at 3,000 to 3,500 warheads.

And in Helsinki, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin agreed that START II is not a wall, but a door—not the end of strategic disarmament, but the opening to its next step, down to a range of 2,000 to 2,500 warheads. As soon as Russia ratifies START II, our negotiators will begin work on those further cuts, which can obviate any perceived need for Russia to add anything at all to its nuclear forces.

Another obstacle to Russian START II ratification concerns the status of the ABM Treaty, which strictly limits national missile defenses. In this realm, as in most others, there is an obvious connection between offense and defense. As the number of offensive missiles comes down, the perceived ability to deter attack can be weakened if the other side can neutralize a retaliatory strike through missile defenses. Accordingly, the ABM Treaty's health does influence the prospects for further strategic arms cuts—and, indeed, even for continued implementation of START I.

Here again, the Helsinki summit was productive—in two ways. First, the two nations again affirmed their commitment to the ABM Treaty. Second, and even more importantly in my view, they moved in a practical way to protect the Treaty, by confirming that it does not interfere with our plans to produce highly capable *theater* defenses—a topic to which I'll return. If the Standing Consultative Commission can translate that political understanding into practical agreement—which has proved elusive in the past—this step can and should clear away another obstacle to START II.

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Meanwhile these U.S.-Russia issues are being overshadowed by a danger no less ominous: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles to rogue regimes and terrorist groups around the world.

- More than 40 countries now have the technical and material ability to develop nuclear weapons, should they decide to do so.

- More than 15 nations have at least short range ballistic missiles—and many of those are pursuing [the development/acquisition of] weapons of mass destruction.

- Some twenty countries—many hostile to us—have chemical weapons programs; another fifteen have the capability and motivation. And chemical weapons *have* been used, most recently in war by Iraq and by terrorists in Tokyo's subway.

- The case of Iraq reminds us that biological weapons are also attractive to outlaw governments and groups.

- And recalling the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombings, we must ponder how even more awful the suffering would have been if even primitive nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons had fallen into the wrong hands.

Cold War constraints are gone. Technology is widely available. Even as we work to counter these dangers militarily, we must work to contain them through arms control.

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Our main tool against the spread of nuclear weapons, of course, is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Without it, for example, I believe North Korea would have nuclear weapons by now—perhaps even enough to sell. The NPT was the basis for possible international sanctions against North Korea's unexplained nuclear program—and now for continued on-site verification that, as agreed, it remains frozen.

In 1995, we succeeded in making the NPT permanent. It is also becoming more nearly universal—with 185 member states and only five remaining outside.

We are strengthening its safeguards. On May 15 the IAEA Board approved an enhanced safeguards initiative adding new technologies and access, such as environmental monitoring away from declared facilities, to help make sure that nuclear weapons programs are not being concealed from inspectors. The next step is for each member country—including the United States—to implement new safeguards agreements.

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The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, even before its entry into force, is already a substantial added barrier to the spread or enhancement of nuclear arsenals. The United States has conducted well over 1,000 nuclear tests—hundreds more than any other country. So we gain security to the extent we lock all nations in place on the nuclear weapons learning curve. For any tiny increment in knowledge we might gain from more tests is dwarfed by the value of preventing tests by others—including rogue states who could derive quantum leaps of capability from even a few explosions.

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As a further barrier, President Clinton has directed that we intensify our efforts this year to negotiate a cut-off in the production of fissile material for weapons. The fissile cutoff is both our best hope of capping the nuclear weapons potential of countries outside the NPT, and an arms control measure to formally limit the nuclear weapon states.

Unfortunately, the cutoff is stalled in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, or CD, by efforts to link it to negotiations there on all nuclear arms and a timebound framework for their elimination. As I told the CD plenary session May 15, such ill-founded linkage not only fails to advance nuclear disarmament but can set it back, and in the process drive the CD to the periphery of international affairs. How ironic it would be if the 23 new members were to find they struggled to get into the CD, to miss out on its glory and only share in its decline.

Meanwhile we also need to deal with fissile material already in being. Dismantlement of U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons obviously is a good thing, but with a dangerous side effect—the release of tons of the special nuclear materials from which others could make a bomb. Many experts have identified this so-called "loose nukes" problem as a leading danger of our time. I think they are right. It is important that in Helsinki Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin agreed that START III would include measures relating to both the transparency of strategic nuclear warhead inventories and the irreversible warhead destruction.

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U.S. ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention this spring opens the way to the real heavy lifting in arms control, in implementation, including verification and a weighty load of new work for the On Site Inspection Agency. It also lets us turn more negotiating resources to the threat of biological arms. The 1972 Biological Weapons Convention is virtually toothless in terms of ensuring compliance. So we are now negotiating in Geneva to exploit advances in technology and in arms control techniques, to make this treaty, too, into an effective instrument.

In this context, because it is an area of great interest to me, and I know you have a panel dealing with verification technologies, I want to mention the growing contributions of science to arms control. To cite just one example, I recall only a year ago talking about a portable gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) instrument that weighed just 70 pounds, and would be a great resource for monitoring the CWC. Today that same instrument comes in a miniaturized hand-held version.

I'm very proud of ACDA's work, along with DoD and DoE, as co-chair of the Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Technology Working Group, which now coordinates some $2.6 billion in R&D that is relevant to arms control and nonproliferation.

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The spread of ballistic missiles that could carry weapons of mass destruction is another growing security danger. I see these missiles in three broad categories, all bearing on the 1972 ABM Treaty.

- The first are Russia's ICBMs and SLBMs, now in being. As to them, as political conditions evolve, [we shall] stress continued deterrence and further reductions—both of which depend on the ABM Treaty.

- The second category is made up of missiles we might confront in theater, also now in being and improving. As to them, we are negotiating to clarify the line of demarcation between strategic defenses, which the ABM Treaty covers, and theater defenses, which it does not—and have agreed on principles confirming that all six U.S. theater missile defense programs can proceed.

- The third category consists of limited numbers of ICBMs threatened by rogue states. Those are not now in being, and our intelligence says they won't be for at least a dozen years. If they do evolve, future arms controllers may well be called upon to negotiate amendments to the ABM Treaty to permit limited national defenses. In the meantime, *we* need the ABM Treaty. Prematurely junking it would help perpetuate weapons that could threaten us right now.

In short, I hope we can manage, as a nation, to drain some of the emotion and theology from the debate over missile defense, and develop a common assessment of what our security requires—and when.

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If you consider the *potential* of arms to inflict damage, you are obviously drawn to weapons of mass destruction, which can wipe out whole cities at a time. But if you consider their *actual* impact, you are drawn to conventional weapons, which routinely *are* wiping out whole cities, a few people at a time.

One way to attack this issue is to address specific weapons that have extraordinary effects on civilians—such as antipersonnel landmines, which are scattered across the globe and kill or maim some 25,000 non-combatants annually, mostly children playing or farmers returning to their fields, long after a war is over. Last year the United States led a successful international negotiation to control mines that cannot be detected or will not self-destruct. Now President Clinton has urged a bolder step—negotiation of a global ban on antipersonnel landmines. This will be a leading priority of the second Clinton term.

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This has necessarily been a broad overview. I have barely touched, for example, on the fastest-growing parts of our mission—in implementing, verifying, and enforcing arms control agreements, in regional arms control and confidence building, or in relevant export control and sanctions regimes such as the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Missile Technology Control Regime.

But I hope even this outline has been enough to support the conclusion that arms control is a vital and growing national security mission—fully warranting what President Clinton has called "the most ambitious agenda to dismantle and fight the spread of weapons of mass destruction since the dawn of the nuclear age."

For the overriding reality is that we live in a dangerous world—one still bristling with the overarmament of the Cold War, and facing new dangers of proliferation, convulsive nationalism, terrorism, drug trafficking, and many others that directly affect us.

For as far as we can see into the future, that will require defenses second to none. And for precisely the same reasons, it will require assiduous and creative efforts to control arms.

For we have demonstrated in one hard-won agreement after another that when we control arms we control our fate . . . buttress our freedom . . . enhance our security *and* our prosperity.

Now more than ever before, arms control must be a central element in the kind of unified national security strategy that befits a great power in a perilous world.