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Raymond Aron, Brian Barry, Jonathan Bennett, Robert Coles, George J. Stigler, Wallace Stegner, and Michel Foucault

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*Arms Control and Peace Research*

RAYMOND ARON

THE TANNER LECTURES ON HUMAN VALUES

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RAYMOND ARON studied philosophy at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and at the Sorbonne. Following the *agrégation de philosophie*, he studied in Germany, especially the phenomenologists Husserl and Heidegger and the sociologists, primarily Max Weber. Before the war, he published books on German sociology and philosophy of history and an *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*. After the war, he combined a journalistic career as columnist for *Figaro*, from 1947 to 1977, and now the *Express*, with teaching at the Sorbonne and finally at the Collège de France. His best-known books are *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, *Eighteen Lectures on Industrial Society, Peace and War among Nations*, *Essay on Liberties*, *Penser la guerre. Clausewitz*, and *In Defense of Decadent Europe*.

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The juxtaposition of the two notions *arms control* and *peace research* may at first sight surprise the reader. The first notion implies theoretical and practical research into the ways first, of reducing the risk of war, and nuclear war in particular; second, of reducing devastation if in spite of everything war were to break out; and third, of reducing the cost of armaments and slowing down the arms race. The second notion encompasses all studies relating to the causes of wars and, in more general terms, all the situations and practices dangerous to peace.

The classical period of arms control, a conception of American origin, occurred during the later 1950's and the early 1960's. It developed in response to the strategic and technical studies carried out on nuclear arms and their impact on diplomacy and war. The peace research institutes which proliferated mainly during the 1960's were often in opposition to the American institutes, which concentrated chiefly on nuclear weapons and strategy. The research centres which use the word 'peace' in their titles do not limit their focus to the two European blocs, to American and Soviet strategy, or to nuclear weapons. The inequality among nations and the world economic order also come under their scrutiny insofar as they are causes of conflict, and at any event manifestations of violence — 'structural violence', as the adherents of this school choose to call it.

In other words, arms control specialists tend to be primarily interested in nuclear weapons and the dangers of war related to them. Peace research specialists, on the other hand, tend to broaden out their investigations to cover all forms of armaments and violence. Of the two schools, only the first has exercised any influence on statesmen and the course of events. Some of the ideas thrown out by academics and think-tank researchers have been

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taken up and put into practice. The SALT I and SALT II agreements, for example, spring from the school of arms control. And the debate provoked by SALT II raises questions concerning the basis of arms control itself.

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The French term *maîtrise des armements* conveys the original intention of *arms control* rather better than the English expression. Arms control implies neither disarmament, verification, nor inspection, but a refusal to give in to the dynamic of the arms race. It implies the will to become again, as Descartes put it, both master and possessor of nature — or in this case, arms. Disarmament is not necessarily the aim, since its chief objective is to prevent war, and it has not been established that disarmament invariably helps to prevent it. For example, in retrospect, most people would admit that, faced with Hitler in 1935, rearmament would have been preferable to disarmament. The theoreticians of arms control do not adopt the thesis that wars are a result of the arms race. They study the means by which, in a given situation, the risk of war can be prevented from increasing through either an excess or an insufficiency of arms. The balance of terror is better safeguarded by a few hundred rather than by a few dozen intercontinental missiles.

The theory of arms control, almost self-evident in its principles, would not have been of any special interest in itself if the conjunction of superpower rivalry and the existence of nuclear weapons had not presented what might be a perfect example of 'arms control'. The supporters of this theory take as a starting point that a genuine and fundamental political consensus between the United States and the Soviet Union is out of the question. They also hold that both rivals hope to avoid a nuclear conflict. Starting from these two premises, arms control consists in fixing the relationship of force between the two superpowers at a level compatible with both the *desire of each side to get the better of*

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*the other in confrontations if possible, and their common desire not to destroy each other. The stumbling block, and perhaps the contradiction, inherent in this theory lies in the clash between the obviously antagonistic goals of the two powers and their assumed common interest. Is it really possible to agree on a limitation of armaments favorable to the nonuse of nuclear weapons without, on another level, political or military, favouring one or other of the protagonists?*

The first steps in arms control were expressions of *the common purpose*, which, by their nature, did not excite much controversy. The best example is the telephone hot line. It is important, in the heat of a crisis, that the two heads of state be able to communicate directly. Dialogue is not enough to guarantee a solution, but it offers a better chance for avoiding the worst. A second agreement attributable to arms control is the partial suspension of nuclear tests. Common human interest justifies the ban on tests within the atmosphere, so as not to pollute the air we breathe and to avoid radioactive fallout from which other populations would suffer. The comprehensive test ban would slow down or prevent the deployment of new or better weapons.

But the ban has also served another purpose of arms control: to hinder what is called the proliferation (or dissemination) of nuclear weapons and the enlargement of the atomic club. I don't propose to analyse the basis of this theory in detail here: I would simply like to make the point that the ban does embody certain political implications. The first powers to employ nuclear weapons are attempting to reserve this weapon, monstrous or decisive, for themselves — which invites the question, from a preoccupation with peace in general or from self-interest?

Other measures — the renunciation of chemical and biological weapons, and the nonmilitarisation of space and ocean bed — caused no stir. The agreement regarding the nonmilitarisation of space has been partially respected so far: no bombs have been put in space (it has not presented any apparent military advantage).

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But it is widely known that the Soviets have carried out experiments in the destruction of satellites and that the Americans, in turn, are working on similar projects.

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The first arms limitation agreement was signed by Leonid Brezhnev and Richard Nixon in 1972, together with a declaration laying down the mode of conduct to which the two signatories subscribed. The two signing states committed themselves to restraint (the favorite word of the Secretary of State at the time). They would not try to take 'unilateral advantage' at each other's expense. The link between arms limitation and the diplomatic conduct of the two superstates did not bring about a visible change either in Moscow or in Washington. The same mixture of limited cooperation and permanent opposition still marks their intercourse. (The two superpowers, according to the theory, agree on the ceiling of strategic nuclear arms imposed on each of them in the hope of slowing down the arms race in this field and creating a stable situation that should reduce the risk of war and the actual use of these weapons.)

This treaty and a second, which has still not been ratified by the Senate, have only done away with or, rather, impeded the development of a single system of weapons: antiballistic missiles, or what the Americans call ABM. The Soviets had already installed an ABM system around Moscow which, according to the Americans, was of doubtful efficiency. Meanwhile, the Americans were in the process of setting up their own system which the military leaders hoped to deploy at least around Washington and to protect the silos of intercontinental missiles. According to Henry Kissinger, when Lyndon Johnson brought up the question of a common abandonment of ABM, Premier Kosygin replied that he had never heard such a stupid proposal. But a few months later the Soviets were eagerly underwriting that very proposal: the conscious and determined decision to give up all defence against

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missiles, or, in other words, to *guarantee the vulnerability* of the territory of the two superpowers. Each of the two reserved the right to protect one site. The United States, at least, has not used that right.

The abandonment of ABM, whatever its accidental cause, had one lasting significance in that it revealed the inspiration behind arms control. What was the objective of the SALT negotiators? Stability: another word for equilibrium but with its own connotation. According to press commentators, the relationship between the two great nuclear powers would be stable on the day when neither of the two would be tempted to have recourse to these weapons, knowing that the reprisals would be equally destructive to themselves. This assurance of reciprocal destruction is reinforced by the *absence of defence* and by the *vulnerability of the cities*, but, at the same time, by the *invulnerability of the weapons of retaliation*. From here one passes from stability to the idea of *mutually assured destruction*, also known as MAD. Nuclear weapons, according to this doctrine, have no other function than to prevent their own military use.

The writers of the *New York Times*, for example, argued against the technology of the MIRV's (multiple independently-targetable re-entry vehicles). To the Soviets, the massive increase in the number of nuclear warheads would constitute a threat because it reinforced American counterforce capability. Without any doubt, the Soviets would go on to do the same, increasing the number of their launchers or their warheads. Either one of the two would ensure a substantive superiority for itself and put the opposing forces in danger; according to this hypothesis, stability would be compromised. Another possibility, far more probable, would be that the two camps would regain the same stability and the same strike capability, but on a higher level of both expenditure and number of weapons. Events confirmed the second alternative. But the academic strategists had never accepted such a simplistic interpretation of deterrence during the 1960's.

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If it is demanded of the nuclear force of the United States only that it should be able to inflict enormous devastation on the aggressor at a second strike, the task of those in power is singularly simplified. The 41 submarines, each carrying 16 MIRV'ed missiles, alone can inflict untold damage on the Soviet Union (and not even that number is necessary). However, such an action against enemy resources would be more or less suicidal, because it would call down upon American cities an equivalent catastrophe.

In other words, the theory of arms control, in this form, implies a strategic doctrine. If one defines stability as the invulnerability of the main forces of the two superpowers, arms control should aim not only at stability, but at the elimination of all counterforce capability. For the counterforce capability of one camp presupposes the vulnerability, if only partial, of the enemy force. This explains why some statesmen of the United States, Robert MacNamara in particular, seemed both to want and to fear the counterforce capability that they still possessed by the early 1960's. MacNamara repeatedly advised the Soviets to protect their missiles better and to reinforce their silos. His reasoning was that the Soviets would be tempted to strike first if they thought they were at the mercy of an American first strike.

Via these arguments, arms control leads to what the strategists call the *minimum deterrent*, the capacity to deter the adversary from a nuclear attack against one's own territory. But with or without arms control both the United States and the Soviet Union already wield this minimal deterring power. Years of negotiation would not have been necessary to arrive at this kind of stability — a partial stability, limited to a single level of strategic nuclear weaponry. Is this kind of partial stability in conformity with the strategic doctrine of American diplomacy? Is the minimum deterrent sufficient to guarantee the security of the allies of the United States? Stability at one level, restricted to one type of weaponry,



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does not, by itself, stabilise the overall relations between the two superstates.

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Beyond the abandonment of ABM, SALT I fixed a ceiling on the number of intercontinental missiles the two superpowers were allowed to own. The Soviets were allotted a ceiling around 40 per cent higher than the Americans, who, thanks to MIRV technology, owned a far higher number of nuclear warheads. The Senate ratified SALT I without much resistance. It did, however, demand that the subsequent treaty should re-establish equality in the number of the two superpowers' intercontinental missiles.

The intercontinental ballistic missile systems of the United States and the Soviet Union present such structural differences that trying to determine equality or parity or equivalence leads to endless discussion. The negotiators finally agreed on the total number of strategic nuclear missiles (2,400 and subsequently — from January 1, 1982 — 2,250), the total number of land-launched missiles equipped with MIRV's (820), the total number of MIRV'ed missiles (1,320), and the maximum number of nuclear warheads inserted in a single heavy missile (10).

In SALT I, there was one ceiling for land-based missiles, another for SLBM's. In SALT II, there remains a ceiling for all intercontinental missiles, but inside this total global number of launchers each one of the two signatories retains the right to determine the composition of the aggregates, the percentages of ICBM's, SLBM's, and bombers. On the Soviet side, the proportion of ICBM's is 62 per cent, on the American side only 40 per cent. SALT II attempts to slow down, if not to stop altogether, the renewal of arms and quantitative progress by specific measures. The original internal volume of an ICBM silo launcher should not be increased by more than 32 per cent; there is the interdiction against increasing the launch-weight or the throw-weight of the heavy ICBM, flight testing or deploying new types of ICBM's

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(with the exception of one light model), the interdiction against increasing the number of reentry vehicles for the ICBM, SLBM, etc.

There is still today a passionate debate about SALT II, advantages and dangers. It is not my purpose to go into the details of the controversy in order to discuss the consequences of the treaty for Europe. I shall concentrate on the key objections of the adversaries of the treaty, leaving aside also the uncertainties of verification.

The Soviet heavy launcher, the SS-18, can carry up to ten nuclear warheads. The ceiling on the SS-18 is fixed at 308. If the nuclear warheads of these heavy launchers have the firing accuracy that the Americans think they do, they could destroy at a single blow almost the entire United States force of Minutemen, other land-launched missiles, and airfields. These are the most accurate missiles, the best adapted to counterforce. In response to a hypothetical destruction of the American land-launched missiles, the President of the United States could only use either the submarine-launched missiles or the bombers, equipped with cruise missiles or not, at the risk of triggering mutual destruction, the devastation of the industrial system, and a senseless orgy of violence.

SALT II's supporters do not deny that towards 1983 the Soviets will indeed have the capacity to destroy some 90 percent of the United States' land-launched missiles, whereas under the treaty the United States would not have the equivalent capacity to destroy the Soviet land-launched missiles. As of June 12, 1979, the United States had at its disposal, in addition to 1,054 land-launched missiles, 656 submarine-launched missiles (including 496 equipped with MIRV's), and 573 heavy bombers. Whatever the effectiveness of a Soviet first strike, it could not take away from the United States its capacity for massive reprisals. But having once destroyed the American land-launched missiles in a first strike, the Soviet Union would still have more than enough missiles to lay waste the territory of the United States.