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Author(s): Samuel B. Payne Jr.

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THE SOVIET DEBATE ON STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION: 1968-72

By SAMUEL B. PAYNE JR.

THE two strategic arms limitation agreements signed by the United States and the Soviet Union on 26 May 1972 are the most recent arms control agreements concluded by the super-powers.¹ Strategic arms limitation had become the most important area of arms control negotiations during the late 1960s because the relatively stable deterrent balance of the early 1960s was threatened by the further deployment of strategic nuclear weapons. It was threatened by the development, mostly in the United States, of a new generation of strategic nuclear weapons that would soon enter service if their deployment were not limited by mutual agreement, and by the rapid quantitative expansion of the Soviet Union's strategic missile forces. In essence, the arms limitation agreements forbid the United States to deploy its 'Safeguard' anti-missile system, one of the most destabilizing of the new generation of strategic nuclear missiles, and in return forbid the Soviet Union to deploy additional ICBMs and missile submarines. Each country gains the suppression of the other's arms deployment measures that it fears the most and is relieved of the necessity of countering those measures.² The strategic arms limitation agreements do not eliminate all danger of a new strategic nuclear weapons arms race, but they do reduce that danger.³

The negotiations for the strategic arms limitation agreement inspired considerable discussion and conflict of opinion in the United States. The conflicts of opinion in the Soviet Union were probably no less intense; the issues involved were as important and complex for the Soviet Union as for the United States, and disagreements on policy are usually as intense within the Soviet government as within that of the

¹ The Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems forbids the United States and the Soviet Union to deploy anti-ballistic missiles except for two complexes, of 100 missiles each, allowed each country. The Interim Agreement forbids further construction of intercontinental ballistic missiles and missile submarines for five years.

² This view of the agreements as a 'trade-off', swapping American ABMs for Soviet missiles, is stated in John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn* (New York, 1973).

³ A second rather desultory round of negotiations (SALT II), devoted to solving the problems left untouched by the first round and extending the Interim Agreement, is proceeding.

United States.⁴ This article will follow the course of the debate on strategic arms limitation as it was reflected in the pages of Soviet scholarly and semi-scholarly publications. It will attempt to bring out some aspects of Soviet élite opinion towards arms control and towards foreign policy generally. It will also examine whether there is, within the Soviet élite, a consensus on strategic arms limitation strong enough to support further progress in the many areas left untouched by the 1972 agreements.

The publications principally employed in this study fall into two categories: the academic international relations journal *SShA* (USA) and *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya* (World Economics and International Relations), and the military publications *Krasnaya zvezda* (Red Star) and *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil* (Communist of the Armed Forces). Both extremes in the Soviet arms control debate, and most shades of opinion in between, were expressed in these publications, with the military periodicals almost always hostile to arms control and the academic journals expressing both hostile and approving views. The period from 1968 to May 1972 has been chosen for examination because it marks a distinct cycle in the Soviet debate on arms control, from the first definite indications of Soviet interest in strategic arms limitation in May 1968⁵ to the signing of the arms limitation treaties in May 1972.

One peculiarity of Soviet writings on arms control and military strategy should be noted here. Soviet discussions of supposed American motives for favouring or rejecting particular arms control measures are often disguised discussions of Soviet motives for favouring or rejecting the same measures.⁶ Under this guise, Soviet writers can examine themes they could not explore directly. Many of the questions a government must decide in contemplating an arms control agreement are simply outside the permitted area for public discussion of Soviet policy. Soviet writers can advance reasons why a country or its ruling élite might find disarmament disadvantageous only with reference to the United States; it is a basic Soviet dogma that the Soviet Union has always favoured disarmament and has no reason whatever for continuing the arms race. It is at least very much easier and safer for Soviet writers to discuss the dangers of the arms race or of a possible nuclear war with reference only to the United States. There is a rather wide streak of compulsive optimism in Soviet public statements, and this makes it difficult for Soviet writers to envisage even the possibility of the Soviet Union's being in a disadvantageous position. It is safer to affirm the

⁴ There is a vast literature on Soviet intra-élite conflict. Michel Tatu's *Power in the Kremlin* (New York, 1970) is the reference most appropriate for our purposes.

⁵ Newhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁶ Newhouse points out that 'Connoisseurs know that the only available means of commenting on the Soviet military is to comment on the American military' (*ibid.*, p. 58).

dogma that the Soviet Union always favours disarmament, but solely from inherent Soviet virtue; while the Soviet Union has no stake in the arms race, the arms race does not in any way endanger the Soviet Union. This may be supportive for the *apparatchiki*, but it makes an undisguised discussion of real Soviet choices and priorities difficult. Thus, when Soviet arms control proponents quote their American opposite numbers on the dangers of the arms race for the United States, this can probably be taken as a means of pointing out its dangers for the Soviet Union as well.

In this article the supporters and opponents of strategic arms limitation are designated respectively as 'arms controllers' and 'militarists'.⁷ However, while these two distinct political positions can be clearly discerned, it is sometimes difficult to identify them with particular Soviet institutions. In general, the Soviet military has been hostile to strategic arms limitation while the material in the academic press was about evenly divided between 'militarists' and 'arms controllers'.⁸ That the military's opposition to strategic arms limitation was shared by powerful elements in the civilian hierarchy was shown by the publication of Marshal Krylov's extremely 'militarist' article in the 30 August 1969 issue of *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, a newspaper of the CPSU Central Committee.⁹ While civilian experts such as Arbatov and Trofimenko have generally taken the 'arms controller' position, and military theoreticians such as Colonel Grudin in have been extreme 'militarists', other individuals defy easy classification. V. V. Larionov, for example, generally writes for the civilian academic journals and has been a strong proponent of strategic arms limitation, at least since 1970. However, he is a Colonel in the Soviet armed forces, and an article he wrote in 1968,¹⁰ published significantly enough in the military journal *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil*, argued the 'militarist' position. In addition, Colonels Rybkin and Bondarenko, two Soviet 'militarists' often cited as examples of the belligerency of the Soviet military and of its conflicts with the party hierarchy, are in fact officers in the Main Political Administration. In other words, they are essentially representatives of the party hierarchy, rather than of the military.¹¹

⁷ These are essentially the same factions that Lawrence Caldwell describes as supporters of the 'modernist' and 'orthodox' positions respectively (Lawrence T. Caldwell, *Soviet Attitudes to SALT*, Adelphi Paper 75, London, 1971).

⁸ However, for an example of an article in the military press expressing a favourable view of the negotiations for strategic arms limitation, see V. Kharich, 'V storone ot realisticheskogo podkhoda', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 13 July 1971, p. 3. It should be noted that Kharich's next article in *Krasnaya zvezda*, in the 16 July issue, reverted to orthodox militarism.

⁹ N. Krylov, 'Pouchitel'nye uroki istorii', *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 30 August 1969, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁰ V. V. Larionov, 'Politicheskaya storona sovetskoi voennoi doktriny', *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil*, 1968, no. 22, pp. 11-18.

¹¹ C. G. Jacobsen, *Soviet Strategy—Soviet Foreign Policy* (Glasgow, 1972), pp. 173-4.

Conflicts between the various branches of the Soviet armed forces have not been a major factor in the Soviet strategic debate. However, the strategic arms limitation agreements have had considerable effect on the relative status of these branches. The influential air-defence organization (PVO)¹² has lost the possibility of deploying more than a limited number of ABMs. The agreements seem to mark Soviet acceptance of the impossibility of defending the Soviet population against an American strategic nuclear attack, and thereby to have deprived the PVO of most of its *raison d'être*. The strategic missile forces have lost the possibility of deploying more ICBM launchers, although they may still upgrade the quality and numbers of missiles they already have by changing over to multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs). The Soviet navy probably gains by the arms limitation agreements. The agreements increase the importance of submarine-based missiles and permit an increase in the number of Soviet missile submarines at the expense of land-based ICBMs.¹³ Perhaps these institutional interests are reflected in the absence of naval officers among the Soviet military critics of strategic arms limitation. However, Soviet naval officers have not played a major role in other Soviet strategic debates.¹⁴ Perhaps these institutional interests are also reflected in the article by Marshal Krylov, Commander of the Strategic Missile Forces, which combined strong support for strategic missile forces with an extreme 'militarist' position.¹⁵

Much of the impetus for the strategic arms limitation negotiations came from the series of arms control treaties concluded by the United States and the Soviet Union, from the Antarctica Treaty of 1959 to the Non-Proliferation Treaty of July 1968. The successful conclusion of these treaties was cited by the Soviet government as evidence that agreement could also be reached on strategic arms limitation.¹⁶ The Non-Proliferation Treaty also encouraged the initiation of the arms control negotiations by requiring the United States and the Soviet Union, according to Article VI of that treaty, to seek strategic arms limitation.¹⁷ It also seems that the Non-Proliferation Treaty's denial of nuclear weapons to West Germany, its main significance from the Soviet point of view, was a precondition for Soviet acceptance of any further arms control agreements.¹⁸ More important, the two fundamental causes of Soviet interest in strategic arms limitation were Soviet attainment of

¹² On the importance of the PVO in the Soviet armed forces see John Erickson, *Soviet Military Power* (London, 1971), pp. 47-49.

¹³ Newhouse, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55, 265-6.

¹⁴ Only a tenth of the works by Soviet authors cited in the Select Bibliography of Erickson's *Soviet Military Power* were by naval officers.

¹⁵ Krylov, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ 'Memorandum pravitel'stva SSSR', *Pravda*, 2 July 1968, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Obozrevatel*, 'Vazhnaya problema', *ibid.*, 7 March 1970, p. 4.

¹⁸ Newhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

parity in strategic nuclear weapons with the United States during the late 1960s and the highly destabilizing nature of the new strategic nuclear weapons being developed then.

After several false starts owing to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the change of administration in the United States, the first round of the strategic arms limitation talks was held in December 1969 at Helsinki. Strategic arms limitation occupied no more than a subordinate place in the Soviet disarmament proposals made in 1968,¹⁹ but it came to occupy the central place as the negotiations progressed. There seems to have been considerable opposition to the initiation of arms control negotiations, particularly among the Soviet military; Gromyko's speech of 27 June 1968 to the Supreme Soviet, one of the first indications of Soviet interest in the area, paid its respects to 'good-for-nothing theoreticians who try to tell us . . . that disarmament is an illusion'.²⁰ The Soviet government apparently decided seriously to pursue the strategic arms limitation talks early in 1970. This decision was indicated by an authoritative article by 'Observer' in *Pravda* and two other articles in *SShA* and *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*²¹ strongly favouring strategic arms limitation. For about a year and a half thereafter strong opposition to strategic arms limitation continued to be expressed in the Soviet military press and by many civilian authorities. However, the basis of opposition changed from opposition to arms limitation as such to the safer grounds that arms limitation was desirable, but that the United States would never accept it. The military press was silent on the subject from the summer of 1971 on—an indication of acquiescence in strategic arms limitation although probably not of support for it.

Soviet Views on the Arms Race

The Soviet attitude towards strategic arms limitation is based on two primary considerations: is it desirable for the Soviet Union, and would the United States accept it and abide by a strategic arms limitation treaty? The first involves a complex of questions related to Soviet strategic doctrine. Is the stabilization of the arms race at the present stage of parity possible and desirable? Can the Soviet Union achieve strategic nuclear superiority over the United States? Is there any military or political advantage in attaining strategic nuclear superiority? The second question involves Soviet views on the United States, the motives of its

¹⁹ See, for example, the 'Memorandum pravitel'stva SSSR'.

²⁰ Quoted in Newhouse, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–4.

²¹ *Obozrevatel'*, *op. cit.*; V. Kulish, S. Fedorenko, 'Po povodu diskussii v SShA o strategicheskikh vooruzheniyakh', *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 1970, no. 3, pp. 41–49; V. V. Larionov, 'Strategicheskie debaty', *SShA*, 1970, no. 3, pp. 30–31.

leaders, and the balance of political forces within the United States. On both these broad questions, particularly the second, considerable disagreement between the supporters and opponents of strategic arms limitation is evident. However, underlying the disagreements are basic presuppositions shared by both factions. As I shall argue later, the shared presuppositions are more interesting and revealing than the disagreements.

The primary reason for Soviet acceptance of the strategic arms limitation treaty seems to be the Soviet Union's attainment of parity with the United States in strategic nuclear weapons. Since the beginning of the arms race, students of international relations have pointed out that the Soviet Union would never accept any arms limitations that condemned it to permanent inferiority to the United States.²² About 1970, for the first time since 1945, the Soviet Union attained strategic nuclear parity; to stop mutually the deployment of strategic nuclear weapons at its present level would no longer condemn the Soviet Union to inferiority.²³

Soviet spokesmen themselves describe their attainment of parity as the primary precondition for strategic arms limitation.

[With reference to] the problem of disarmament. Here the principal reality of our time—the basic change in the relationship of forces in favour of socialism, the growth of the power of the USSR, the development of the world revolutionary process—creates the decisive precondition for progress forward.²⁴

The reason Soviet leaders give for thus linking parity and disarmament is that, as long as the United States possesses strategic nuclear superiority, the United States government will refuse to sign any arms limitation agreement lest it limit American ability to use nuclear weapons as a means of military attack or political pressure. However, the most important Soviet motive for refusing to negotiate from a position of strategic nuclear inferiority is somewhat different: not that the agreement could not be negotiated, but that it would leave the Soviet Union subject to coercion based on American strategic nuclear superiority.²⁵ Beyond

²² Thomas B. Larson, *Disarmament and Soviet Policy, 1964–1968* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969), pp. III, 210–14.

²³ Roman Kolkowicz, Matthew P. Gallagher, Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Soviet Union and Arms Control: A Superpower Dilemma* (Baltimore, 1969), p. 3.

²⁴ V. Matveev, 'Bor'ba za mir v menyayushchemsya mire', *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 1971, no. 12, p. 7.

²⁵ I did not find this fear stated openly in any of the Soviet literature and I did not expect to. Such an admission would imply two corollaries which Soviet authors are reluctant to admit even as possibilities: that the Soviet Union was, or ever had been, weaker than the United States, and that the Soviet Union had, or ever could have, ulterior motives for opposing disarmament. Soviet fears of the consequences of American strategic superiority are perfectly reasonable, and any government not obsessively concerned with asserting its invincibility and rectitude would acknowledge them.

that, even if it could be shown that strategic nuclear superiority confers no military or political benefits of any kind, would lie the Soviet leaders' intangible but pervasive fear of permanently conceding superiority to a potential enemy in anything important.

The attainment of strategic nuclear parity, while a necessary condition for Soviet acceptance of strategic arms limitation, is not a sufficient condition. Having attained it, the Soviet Union might continue to build nuclear weapons in search of strategic superiority. Having attained parity, the Soviet leaders must decide whether it is possible to attain strategic nuclear superiority over the United States, and whether such superiority is valuable enough—either as a diplomatic instrument or in the event of a general nuclear war—to repay the costs and risks of its attainment.

Soviet 'arms controllers' argued that neither super-power could attain strategic nuclear superiority over the other. If either tried to attain it, the other could and would build enough weapons to maintain parity.

From the point of view of national security the effort to possess superiority in numbers of rockets and bombers has lost its significance, because at any actually attainable level the other side will expend enough energy and resources to attain that level also.²⁶

They pointed out, in particular, that an ABM system could not help either nation to attain strategic nuclear superiority.

The technical means which make it possible to create an economically acceptable defence system which the enemy would not be able to reduce to nothing by less expensive improvements in offensive means are not foreseen in the near future.²⁷

The 'arms controllers' also argued that strategic nuclear superiority, even if attained, conferred no significant advantage on its possessor. They pointed out that neither super-power would dare launch a nuclear attack against the other because the opponent, even if weaker, would still be able to inflict unacceptable devastation on the aggressor. Since strategic nuclear weapons could not be used in war, the threat of their use as a means of political pressure was not a convincing threat.

'Strategic superiority' loses all meaning under modern conditions, since its political utilization in peacetime, and even more its realization in the eventuality of war, are ruled out. Blackmail with the aid of military force in political actions does not now promise success, since

²⁶ V. V. Larionov, 'Transformatsiya kontseptsii "strategicheskoi dostatochnosti"', *SShA*, 1971, no. 11, p. 30; see also Kulish, Fedorenko, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁷ Larionov, 'Strategicheskie debaty', p. 26.

accumulated military might cannot be used without a guarantee of one's own invulnerability.²⁸

In general, 'the events of recent years have clearly shown the limited significance of military power in itself for attaining the objectives of foreign policy'.²⁹ The United States is, of course, a particularly clear example of this phenomenon:

Indeed never before have the United States possessed such a quantity of weapons as now and, at the same time, never before have they encountered such great difficulties in foreign policy as they have to deal with now.³⁰

Soviet 'militarists' opposed the 'arms controllers' quite directly on this issue during 1968 and 1969. Several of them affirmed that a meaningful victory could still be attained even in a thermo-nuclear war. Marshal Krylov gave the clearest exposition of this position:

Imperialist ideologues try to lull the vigilance of the peoples of the world, resorting to propagandist deceptions to the effect that in a future thermo-nuclear war it would not be possible to be victorious. These lying affirmations are contradicted by the objective laws of history Victory in a war, if the imperialists, despite all, dare to unleash it, would go to world socialism and all progressive humanity.³¹

Therefore, strategic nuclear superiority, as well as superiority in other areas of military endeavour, remains desirable and important; the Soviet Union must achieve strategic nuclear superiority over the United States.³² Soviet 'militarists' called for the continued strengthening of the Soviet armed forces and continued high arms expenditures.

Under present-day conditions the task of greatest importance for the socialist countries is the strengthening of their armed forces, the raising of their power and military readiness.³³

The 'militarist' position on the arms race amounted to an indirect denial of the usefulness to the Soviet Union of arms limitation agree-

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁹ 'Mezhdu Khel'sinki i Venoi', *SShA*, 1970, no. 1, p. 62.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62. All these examples are meant to have particular reference to the United States, and many of them are based on the statements of American 'arms controllers' but, for reasons that I have discussed, they can reasonably be taken as meant to apply to the Soviet Union as well.

³¹ Krylov, *op. cit.*, p. 3; see also Larionov, 'Politicheskaya storona sovetskoi voennoi doktriny', p. 15.

³² I. Grudin, 'Kachestvennaya i kolichestvennaya opredelennost' voisk', *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil*, 1968, no. 11, p. 16; M. Cherednichenko, 'Ekonomika i voenno-tehnicheskaya politika', *ibid.*, 1968, no. 15, p. 14.

³³ E. Rybkin, 'Kritika burzhaznykh kontseptsii voyny i mira', *ibid.*, 1968, no. 18, p. 90.

ments even if the United States accepted an agreement. It was not likely that such statements would be permitted to continue very long after the decision to attempt to reach an agreement had been made. In fact, no expressions of this position could be found in the literature after the end of 1969. Lawrence Caldwell argues that the crucial resource-allocation decision was probably made at the December 1969 meeting of the CPSU Central Committee.³⁴ While pre-December statements demanded higher military spending, those made later argued that the party was already doing everything necessary to meet military needs.³⁵ After 1969 the 'militarists' retreated to their fall-back position: arms limitation agreements might be desirable but the United States would never accept them.

The 'arms controllers' felt and argued that it was particularly urgent to halt the arms race then, more so than it had been earlier. In the absence of a strategic arms limitation agreement, a new round of the arms race would begin, characterized by radically new offensive and defensive weapons systems, such as MIRVs and ABMs:

The internal logic of the development of the arms race led by the end of the 1960s to the beginning of a new, sharp turn in its spiral. The next round of the arms race is characterized . . . by the wide development of work on new weapons systems—above all anti-rocket defences (ABMs) and missiles with individually-separable and individually-targeted warheads (MIRVs). This threatens the creation of an extremely 'destabilized' situation. To be more precise, the threat of a thermo-nuclear war is increasing.³⁶

These new weapons would in turn call forth other, still more advanced weapons to overcome them. The force of inertia favours the continuation of the arms race, and only extraordinary measures, such as an arms limitation agreement, could obviate a continued and even intensified arms race:

Not even special conditions are needed, obviously, for us to stumble into a new round of the arms race—for that it is sufficient that nothing be done in the opposite direction.³⁷

The new round in the arms race would, of course, be characterized by increasing spending for strategic nuclear weapons. Soviet 'arms controllers' pointed out that American expenditures on strategic nuclear

³⁴ Caldwell, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³⁵ Compare the statement by Rybkin (see note 33 above) with this from a 'militarist' article of 1970: 'Taking account of the growing aggressiveness of imperialism, the Soviet people under the leadership of the Communist Party continually look to the strengthening of the armed might of the country' (S. Leont'ev, 'Raketno-yadernyi shchit rodiny', *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil*, 1970, no. 20, p. 36).

³⁶ 'Mezhdu Khel'sinki i Venoi', p. 60.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

weapons, having reached a low point in the mid-1960s, had almost doubled by the end of the decade and were planned to increase even more.³⁸ By implication, the Soviet Union would have to spend equally large sums to keep up if the arms race continued. The 'arms controllers' consistently pointed out the importance of encouraging Soviet economic growth, particularly in the most technologically-advanced industries. Therefore, they advocated *détente* partly because it would permit a reduction of Soviet arms expenditures, allowing more for economic development.³⁹ The connection between arms expenditures and Soviet economic problems was rarely made explicit. However, the Soviet drive for strategic nuclear equality during the late 1960s was accompanied by a perceptible decline in the Soviet Union's rate of economic growth.⁴⁰ It seems that Soviet deployment of ICBMs had begun to slow down after 1970, even before the strategic arms limitation agreements were signed.⁴¹ Therefore, it seems likely that the Soviet economy was experiencing difficulty in supporting the Soviet strategic nuclear arms construction programme, and that Soviet 'arms controllers' pointed this out as an argument for strategic arms limitation, privately if not in the open literature.

Soviet Views on Arms Limitation and the United States

Soviet views on whether or not the United States would accept a strategic arms limitation agreement were sharply divided throughout the 1968–72 period. However, while disagreeing on this basic issue, Soviet 'arms controllers' and 'militarists' shared large areas of agreement in their views of the United States. Both groups generally agreed that the American government was as hostile to the Soviet Union as it dared be and would be deterred from aggression only by superior Soviet force. Both also agreed that the balance of power in the world had shifted against the United States and in favour of the Soviet Union. For both 'arms controllers' and 'militarists' the most important characteristic of American politico-military strategy is the conjunction of these two factors: 'the contradiction between the striving of American imperialism to carry out its policy "from a position of strength" and its real capabilities'.⁴²

The 'arms controllers' and the 'militarists' disagreed on the American government's reaction to the dilemma posed by this contradiction between its aggressive intentions and its declining power. The 'arms controllers' emphasized the constraints on American foreign policy, the

³⁸ Larionov, 'Strategicheskieskie debaty', p. 23.

³⁹ Caldwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 2–3.

⁴⁰ Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945–1970* (Baltimore, 1970), pp. 246–7, 501–2.

⁴¹ Jacobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–91, 116.

⁴² Larionov, 'Transformatsiya kontseptsii "strategicheskoi dostatochnosti"', p. 27.

American ruling élite's awareness of those constraints, and the limitation of American foreign policy to minimum objectives. The 'militarists' emphasized the unchanging nature of American foreign policy, and the government's attempt to carry out its traditional aggressive policies despite all obstacles.

Both factions, for example, see (ex-) President Nixon's nuclear 'sufficiency' doctrine as a partial recognition of the United States' declining power, as well as an attempt to escape from the consequences of that decline. However, V. V. Larionov, arguing for the 'arms controller' position, sees the doctrine of 'sufficiency' as designed only 'not to lose the most important thing—not to compromise the very idea of the use of force, above all military force, as an active instrument of policy in the 1970s'. One of his 'militarist' opponents, M. Mil'shtein, argues that the doctrine is intended to secure the United States' ability to carry out a thermo-nuclear first strike against the Soviet Union:

Not only the ruling powers of the United States but also the entire military leadership of NATO considers it necessary to dispose of 'sufficient' nuclear forces to be able to carry out a nuclear first strike.⁴³

Soviet 'arms controllers' see the shift in the world balance of power in favour of the Soviet Union, and in particular its attainment of strategic nuclear parity, as one of the major forces constraining the United States to accept strategic arms limitation. There is no profit for the United States in the arms race because, now that the Soviet Union has attained parity, the United States cannot use its strategic nuclear superiority as an instrument of political pressure:

If only a few years ago the imperialist states, chief among them the United States, still hoped with the help of the arms race to strengthen their positions in the international arena and at the same time to frustrate the plans for peaceful self-development in the USSR and other socialist countries, now all these calculations of the enemies of socialism have failed completely. The socialist states have even more strengthened their economy and defences.⁴⁴

This argument assumes, of course, that the United States' former strategic superiority once lost cannot be regained. Any attempt to regain it through a new round in the arms race can be matched weapon for weapon by the Soviet Union. With the American imperialists' chief

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 27; M. Mil'shtein, 'Amerikanskii voennye doktriny: preemstvennost' i modifikatsiya', *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 1971, no. 8, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁴ V. Shestov, 'Razoruzhenie—ideal sotsializma', *ibid.*, 1971, no. 10, p. 12; see also Matveev, *op. cit.*, p. 7, O. Bykov, 'O nekotorykh chertakh vneshnepoliticheskoi strategii SShA', *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 1971, no. 4, p. 56.

positive reason for continuing the arms race destroyed, its disadvantages for them become even more compelling.

Popular and élite opposition within the United States to the arms race is seen as a major constraint on United States government policy. Soviet 'arms controllers' point out that many members of the American politico-military establishment have joined the opposition:

Half the Senate and many representatives of US business circles have opposed the ABM programme. Scientists and experts who had themselves actively participated in the arms build-up in the past were drawn into the campaign against the new round in the arms race. They were mainly people who had occupied official posts in previous American administrations.⁴⁵

This is an important point for the Soviet Union because it means that arms limitation agreements can be negotiated even while the class composition of the American government remains substantially the same, even before the presumably peace-loving masses seize power in the United States. All sections of Soviet published opinion point out widespread popular dissatisfaction with the burden of military expenditures in the United States. However, the 'arms controllers' go beyond this to indicate that this popular dissatisfaction can have considerable impact on the policies of the American government.⁴⁶ They grant that there are powerful forces in the United States opposed to strategic arms limitation—the well-known 'military-industrial complex'.⁴⁷ The picture of the United States that they present is that of a deeply-divided nation, within which a bitter struggle between opponents and supporters of strategic arms limitation is occurring. Therefore, by implication, American policy can be affected by Soviet actions. Further Soviet arms deployment will move the United States towards a renewed arms race, while negotiations can move it towards *détente*.⁴⁸

Soviet 'militarists' do not deny the existence of opposition to the arms race in the United States, but they heavily discount it and deny that it could have any effect on government policy:

Despite the very strong opposition to the arms race which has arisen in the USA in recent years, the realization of these plans [for the

⁴⁵ Larionov, 'Strategicheskie debaty', p. 24; see also 'Mezhdru Khel'sinki i Venoi', p. 62, Kulish, S. Fedorenko, *op. cit.*, p. 45, G. A. Trofimenko, 'Militarizm i vnutri-politicheskaya bor'ba', *SShA*, 1972, no. 1, p. 71.

⁴⁶ Matveev, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Kulish, S. Fedorenko, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁴⁷ G. A. Arbatov, 'Perspektivy razryadki sovetsko-amerikanskikh otnoshenii', *SShA*, 1972, no. 2, p. 28; 'Mezhdru Khel'sinki i Venoi', p. 62; Obozrevatel', *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ I think Larionov is hinting at this very sensitive thesis when he observes that 'The fact that the strategic debates have developed at the time of preparation for and the beginning of Soviet-American negotiations on controlling the strategic arms race has contributed to their great sharpness' (Larionov, 'Strategicheskie debaty', p. 24).

development and deployment of strategic nuclear weapons] is going ahead full blast.⁴⁹

Another representative example of this school devotes three pages of an article to the activities of the 'military-industrial complex' and one sentence to the opposition.⁵⁰ The 'militarists' frequently assert that the 'military-industrial complex' and the extreme right have become even stronger than before in the United States within recent years:

The long-continued arms race, unprecedented development of militarism and in particular the 'dirty war' in Vietnam have led in the USA to a stirring up of ultra-right reaction, curtailment of bourgeois democracy, strengthening of chauvinism and racism, . . . an atmosphere of anti-communist hysteria and establishment of the usages of a 'garrison state'.⁵¹

While the 'arms controllers' stress the flexibility of American policy, the 'militarist' picture of the American policy-making process implicitly denies that Soviet actions can have much effect on it. American policy is permanently aggressive, and therefore a Soviet arms build-up cannot make it more aggressive.

The 'militarists' see aggressive intentions towards the Soviet Union as the primary characteristic of American policy.⁵² While the 'arms controllers' looked to the changing balance of power to dissuade the United States from aggression, the 'militarists' argued that it made American aggression even more likely:

Step by step, as the general crisis of capitalism deepens, the imperialists rely even more on military power, on its direct utilization or the threat of its use in international conflicts.⁵³

Military power is, naturally enough, the most important instrument of American aggression. It follows, therefore, that the American government is inevitably driven to seek to attain strategic nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union:

⁴⁹ B. G. Dostupov, 'Na putyakh voenno-tekhnicheskoi gonki', *SShA*, 1970, no. 8, p. 113.

⁵⁰ 'Udarnaya sila amerikanskogo imperializma', *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil*, 1970, no. 20; see also 'Imperializm—istochnik voin', *ibid.*, 1970, no. 19.

⁵¹ R. Faramazyan, 'Sovremennost' i militarizm', *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 1971, no. 6, p. 38; see also 'Imperializm—istochnik voin', pp. 69–70, A. Migolat'ev, 'Aggressivnaya sushchnost' voenno-politicheskoi strategii amerikanskogo imperializma', *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil*, 1971, no. 10.

⁵² This has been a constant, almost obsessive 'militarist' theme throughout the 1968–72 period and before. See, among others, 'Imperializm—istochnik voin', p. 70, 'Udarnaya sila amerikanskogo imperializma', p. 85, Rybkin, *op. cit.*, p. 87, K. Bochkarev, 'Velikii internatsional'nyi dolg', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 14 February 1969, p. 3, K. Skorobogatkin, 'V tselyakh agressii i nashiviy', *ibid.*, 28 December 1969, p. 3.

⁵³ Faramazyan, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

The striving for creation of the superiority of the USA in the field of strategic weapons systems can be explained by three considerations:

- a) the desire to secure for the United States the ability to carry out a nuclear first strike;
- b) the desire to use the so-called 'superiority' for political and psychological pressure both on 'potential enemies' and on friends and allies;
- c) the intention 'to exhaust economically' the Soviet Union in the course of a new round in the nuclear rocket arms race.⁵⁴

It may be that, just as the 'arms controllers' point to the limited utility of strategic nuclear superiority for the United States as a way of arguing against that policy for the Soviet Union, so the 'militarists', by emphasizing the utility of strategic nuclear superiority for the United States, may be pointing out its advantages for the Soviet Union too. This factor is hard to measure. Soviet 'militarists' insist rather strongly that the United States could not achieve its political objectives even if it had strategic nuclear superiority.⁵⁵ Thereby they undercut any covert argument they might be making for the usefulness of strategic nuclear superiority in general. However, they could hardly say anything else without offending against the obligatory optimism of all Soviet public statements.

Both 'arms controllers' and 'militarists' point out the dangers and aggressive intent of American development of MIRVs and ABMs. For the 'militarists' MIRVs are evidence of the adoption of a first-strike strategy by the United States government because of their ability to destroy enemy strategic nuclear missiles on their launching sites.⁵⁶ The ABM programme is described as intended to make an American first strike possible by protecting the United States from the Soviet Union's retaliatory second strike.⁵⁷ The 'arms controllers' tend to agree with this

⁵⁴ G. A. Trofimenko, 'Nekotorye aspekty voenno-politicheskoi strategii SShA', *SShA*, 1970, no. 10, pp. 23-24. For the frequent accusation by Soviet 'militarists' that the USA is planning to launch a surprise attack on the USSR, see, e.g., Mil'shtein, *op. cit.*, p. 31, Migolat'ev, *op. cit.*, p. 81, Krylov, *op. cit.*, p. 3, Grudinin, *op. cit.*, p. 3, S. Lukonin, N. Tarasenko, 'V. I. Lenin ob oboronnoi funktsii sotsialisticheskogo gosudarstva', *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil*, 1969, no. 10, p. 19.

⁵⁵ Trofimenko, 'Nekotorye aspekty voenno-politicheskoi strategii SShA', pp. 24-26.

⁵⁶ M. V. Belousov, 'Sistema MIRV', *SShA*, 1971, no. 9, p. 123; Dostupov, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁵⁷ For an extensive compilation of Soviet attacks on the American ABM programme, see Caldwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-12. It should be noted that until 1969 the USSR did not publicly describe ABM deployment as destabilizing or a menace to world peace. On the contrary, it defended ABMs as a means of lessening the destruction caused by a possible nuclear war. (See *Soviet-American Relations and World Order: Arms Limitations and Policy* (Adelphi Paper 65, London, 1970), p.29.) These Soviet attacks on ABMs began in 1969 when the United States was debating the development and deployment of its 'Safeguard' ABM system; before 1969 the USSR itself had been deploying its rather primitive 'Galosh' ABM system. Thus, while the Soviet post-1969 attacks on ABMs may, as Caldwell says, have played a role in Soviet internal debates,

evaluation;⁵⁸ they have never asserted that there is no danger from the United States, or that the American government does not have aggressive intentions, but only that the danger could be averted by negotiations.

However, there are some rather subtle differences in the two factions' treatment of American weapons development. While the 'militarists' stressed the inherently threatening nature of American imperialism, referring to the weapons as evidence for this, the 'arms controllers' stressed more the threatening nature of particular weapons deployed by the United States or by both super-powers.⁵⁹ If the American government is inherently aggressive, then the only protection against it is to keep Soviet defences at a high level. If the threat comes from particular measures taken by that government, including particular weapons systems that it deploys, then the limitation or abolition of those weapons can be negotiated. Secondly, the 'militarists' tended to portray American weapons deployment as having been carried so far as to be irreversible, while the 'arms controllers' portrayed it as still in its first stages. One of the 'militarists', referring to the American MIRV and ABM programmes, said that 'despite Mr. Laird's expressed intention not to interfere with the progress of Soviet-American negotiations by taking "basic decisions" in the field of strategic weapons construction, several important decisions, as the facts show, have already been taken'.⁶⁰ In contrast, an 'arms controller', referring to a ban on further ABM construction, held that:

An agreement on this problem is a possibility for the future, because the deployment of the given system has only begun. To prevent a dangerous process is always easier than to struggle with it after it has become an accomplished fact and entered into full strength.⁶¹

Here again the 'arms controllers' emphasized the flexibility of the situation, and its responsiveness to Soviet actions, while the 'militarists' emphasized its inflexibility.

Both factions took note of the effect of heavy arms expenditures on the American economy. However, their interpretations of the ruling élite's reaction to these effects is rather different. The 'arms controllers'

they were probably directed mostly at the United States. The main Soviet worry was not that the strategic balance might be destabilized, but that it might be destabilized in favour of the United States.

⁵⁸ Larionov, 'Transformatsiya kontseptsii "strategicheskoi dostatochnosti"', pp. 34-35; *id.*, 'Strategicheskie debaty', p. 27.

⁵⁹ See Larionov's comments on ABMs cited above, and the excerpt from 'Mezhdu Khel'sinki i Venoi' cited above.

⁶⁰ Trofimenko, 'Nekotorye aspekty voenno-politicheskoi strategii SShA', p. 19.

⁶¹ Shestov, *op. cit.*, p. 7. It will be observed that Shestov's 'arms controller' article appeared a year after Trofimenko's article (October 1971 and October 1970), so that the differences between them cannot be ascribed to the further progress of American weapons deployment.

portray the effects of arms expenditures as something that the ruling class at least would have good reason to avoid if possible:

The USA and its capitalist allies ever more and more feel the burdens of the unrestrained arms race, the unavoidable concomitants of which are chronic inflation, systematic monetary crises and other similar phenomena, which have arisen in the capitalist countries as a result of their great military expenditures.⁶²

The 'militarists' tend to mute this theme or ignore it entirely. They may refer to military spending as a burden on the peoples of the capitalist countries, but not as harmful to the economy as a whole, or as a source of effective popular dissent.⁶³ In fact, the 'militarists' sometimes point out certain benefits which the ruling élite derives from the arms race, such as the large profits earned in arms production, or the use of military spending to stabilize the economy.⁶⁴ They also accuse American leaders of trying to use the arms race to damage the Soviet economy by imposing on it burdens greater than it can bear.⁶⁵ In general, the 'arms controllers' emphasize the damage done to the interests and power position of the United States as a whole by arms expenditures, while the 'militarists' emphasize the benefits derived from the arms race by the American ruling élite.

The 'arms controllers' argue that strategic arms limitation is desirable for both super-powers, and that the rulers of the United States can, at least, be induced to recognize its desirability and necessity. Therefore 'despite all the difficulties and obstacles put in the way of limiting the arms race by the imperialist forces, the achievement of this aim is a genuine and feasible cause'.⁶⁶ The 'militarists', while reluctant to question the desirability of arms limitation, very sharply question its acceptability to the American government. They advance a view of that government that holds out little hope for successful arms control negotiations. They conclude that:

The growing aggressiveness of world imperialism poses a great danger for all socialist countries, for the Soviet Union. This places us under the necessity to strengthen the defensive power of the country, to equip the Soviet Armed Forces with the most modern means of defending the socialist Fatherland.⁶⁷

Arms, not treaties, are the Soviet Union's best defence.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 12; see also Larionov, 'Strategicheskie debaty', p. 25.

⁶³ 'Imperializm—istochnik voin', p. 70.

⁶⁴ Faramazyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 32, 37. However, Faramazyan does reaffirm the Khrushchev line that a capitalist economy can survive without heavy arms expenditures.

⁶⁵ See the statement by G. A. Trofimenko cited above. ⁶⁶ Shestov, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶⁷ N. Ponomarev, 'Izmenenie sootnosheniya sil v mire i krizis voennykh doktrin imperializma', *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil*, 1971, no. 14, p. 20.

Conclusions

After the summer of 1971 the 'arms controllers' seemed to be winning the public debate. Whether or not they had the upper hand in the Politburo is, of course, another matter. The Soviet government continued to deploy and develop more strategic nuclear weapons even after reaching parity with the United States during the late 1960s.⁶⁸ However, there was evidently enough support for arms limitation in the Politburo to initiate the strategic arms limitation negotiations, even as strategic arms deployment continued. No either/or choice had to be made. Arms deployment could serve either to provide bargaining counters for the negotiations or to keep Soviet options open if the negotiations failed. Thus, the combination of negotiations and weapons deployment served to defer having to make a final decision on whether or not to seek strategic superiority.

Even the treaty of 26 May 1972 seems not to have resolved the conflict between the 'militarists' and the 'arms controllers'. The Soviet Union has continued rapidly to develop and deploy new strategic nuclear weapons, within the terms of the treaty,⁶⁹ and has also continued negotiations for further arms limitations. Probably the most important consideration for the Soviet leadership is neither the attainment of strategic superiority, nor the attainment of stability and *détente*, but rather to suppress or limit the conflict within the Soviet leadership between the proponents of strategic superiority and the proponents of *détente*. Probably the inspection problem will prevent any further progress on strategic arms limitation.⁷⁰ It is also probable that the Soviet leadership is glad to be enabled—by the inspection problem—to postpone decision in principle as to further strategic arms limitation measures.

The debate reveals basic patterns of Soviet thought shared by both 'militarists' and 'arms controllers'. The most important is the identification of favourable prospects for arms control with growth in Soviet power. The more powerful the Soviet leaders feel their country to be *vis-à-vis* the United States, the more willing they are to consider arms control measures. Vice versa, Soviet leaders also feel that, the more powerful the Soviet Union is, the more likely the United States is to

⁶⁸ Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 503–4. The rate of growth of the Soviet force did slow down.

⁶⁹ *United States Military Posture for FY 1975*, Statement by Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Before the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, 5 March 1974, pp. 6–32, 39–42.

⁷⁰ The agreements of 26 May were very carefully tailored to the verification capabilities of the instruments of intelligence-gathering already in use by both Powers (principally reconnaissance satellites) and thus do not require any on-site inspection. The areas left for consideration in later negotiations are those that require on-site inspection (Newhouse, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–17, 124).

accept arms control. In the Soviet debate on strategic arms limitation this fundamental premise was not questioned by either side. The debate turned mostly on the question of the US power position relative to the Soviet, with the 'arms controllers' emphasizing areas of American weakness, and the 'militarists' elements of American strength.

The Soviet leaders have a number of motives, avowed with varying degrees of freedom, for identifying Soviet power with arms control or disarmament. The most openly avowed is their belief that the United States will not consent to arms control as long as it is stronger than the Soviet Union. This motive probably plays a larger role in the public debates than in private deliberations in the Politburo because it can be publicly acknowledged, whereas other Soviet motives cannot be. However, it is probably a genuine and fairly important consideration. It corresponds to the Soviet images of the United States and of world politics in general.⁷¹ It is difficult for the Soviet leaders to conceive of any aspect of world politics not raising the question of '*kto-kogo*', not involving gains for one side and losses for the other side.⁷² If a disarmament agreement does not involve a loss for the United States, so that it has to be imposed on that country from a position of strength, then it probably involves a loss for the Soviet Union.

A second Soviet motive for refusing to negotiate a strategic arms limitation treaty from a position of weakness is fear of the consequences of American strategic nuclear superiority. Even if this superiority were not great enough to make an American first-strike nuclear attack on the Soviet Union feasible, it might give the United States the advantage in political crises and tests of will short of nuclear war. The effect of a far-reaching arms limitation treaty, negotiated while the United States possessed strategic nuclear superiority, would probably be to ensure its strategic nuclear superiority indefinitely, and deny the Soviet Union the possibility of catching up. Though this consideration is never more than hinted at, it appears to be quite important.

Finally, there is a subjective factor in Soviet thinking on strategic arms limitation and the balance of power, probably not acknowledged even in the inner councils of the Politburo, but nevertheless important. The leaders of the Soviet Union are very fearful people. They see

⁷¹ The obvious exception to the extreme Soviet reluctance to negotiate from weakness is the Test Ban Treaty negotiated in 1963, after the Cuban missile crisis. However, it seems to me that this treaty was far more the result of Frol Kozlov's stroke in April 1963, which greatly weakened the conservative opposition to Khrushchev, than of the missile crisis. The immediate result of the missile crisis was a considerable strengthening of the conservatives and thus a lessening of the prospects for disarmament negotiations. See, although his interpretation differs somewhat from mine, Michel Tatu, *Power in the Kremlin*, pp. 273–352.

⁷² I do not write this in the spirit of pointing out Soviet aberrations from which other countries, notably my own, are happily free. Power and relative advantage *are* the basic stuff of international relations.

themselves as having to struggle, not only against powerful external enemies, but also against internal ones, and against the Russian people's tendency towards passivity, towards letting down their guard against their enemies.⁷³ Because disarmament is a powerful symbol of relaxation and reconciliation with former enemies, even a limited agreement raises fears of lowering one's guard. Therefore, an arms limitation agreement is simply too disturbing psychologically unless the Soviet Union can be seen to be as strong as or stronger than the United States, and the agreement as, to some degree, a defeat for the American government.

Ferrum College, Ferrum, Virginia

⁷³ Nathan Leites, *Kremlin Moods* (Santa Monica, Calif., 1964).