AN ANALYSIS OF DEFENCE POLICIES

Nuclear and non-nuclear options reviewed

TWO VOLUMES

Volume II

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PART 2 – ANSWERS

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EDWARD THOMPSON Co-Founder of END and Vice-President of CND
CASPAR WEINBERGER United States Secretary of Defense since 1981
GEORGE YOUNGER United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence since 1986
The sets of answers which follow are responses to the framework of questions established in Part I. Unless otherwise indicated, the method used has been to take the contributor through the questions orally, to type out the answers, and to send them to him or her to be checked and amended. Each is prefaced by a brief biographical note, and by an editorial comment.
Biographical Note

Lord Carrington has been Secretary-General of NATO since June 1984. Born in 1919, he won the Military Cross in the Second World War, first held Ministerial office as Parliamentary Secretary of State at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in 1951, and served as United Kingdom High Commissioner in Australia from 1956 to 1959. He then served successively as: First
Lord of the Admiralty 1959–63; Leader of the Opposition, House of Lords 1964–70, 1974–79; Secretary of State for Defence 1970–74; and Secretary of State for Energy 1974. He was Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from 1979 until his resignation in April 1982.

Editorial Comment

Communicated during the course of an informal interview in Brussels on July 14, 1986, this set of answers represents the response of an influential international statesman, who has held office of Ministerial rank almost continuously since the age of thirty-two. His familiarity with the working of national and international bureaucracies, and his wide experience in the conduct of public affairs, make him impatient of what he regards as unpractical theorizing of all kinds. In the conversational form of this interview, his exposition of the central perception that deterrence depends upon uncertainty is characteristically clear, forthright and direct. The reader may, perhaps, learn most from answers such as those to questions A2(A)(iii) and B(iii), which, within this context, explicitly acknowledge the conceptual gulf separating those who believe in the efficacy of nuclear deterrence from those who do not, and explain why the latter fail to grasp the essential principle upon which collective security continues to depend.

LORD CARRINGTON

A. Global Policy

1. The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945? OR Has it mainly been other factors?

You can’t prove it one way or the other – it’s almost impossible to say that one or the other is true. But is it just coincidence that, since nuclear weapons have existed, there has been no serious quarrel in Europe, which before was so quarrelsome?

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second strike strategic nuclear force prevent war? OR Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?

The two sets of questions are too clever. The real reason is much more simple. It’s to do with the horror of nuclear weapons in everybody’s minds. They deter
from all major wars, because we are all so frightened of what might happen. It's as simple as that.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has 'flexible response' dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

If you believe, as I do, that the answer to the second question is as I have said that it is, then the answer to the third question is that it is better for people to be frightened of nuclear war all the way down the scale. It has to do with credibility. If you didn't have these options, people might be less frightened.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

I don't hold either of these views. It seems to me that it's perfectly possible to have your nuclear deterrence at a much lower level than you have now. There's much too much, so get rid of what is not needed. We would probably all be happier if numbers were reduced. That is why we are currently negotiating for substantial reductions in the nuclear arsenals of both sides.

On the other hand, I don't believe that, because you've got too much, it necessarily makes life more dangerous. The capability to kill yourself eleven times over is superfluous, but not necessarily dangerous.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of 'nuclear defence' and 'parity' proved illusory and is 'multilateral negotiation from strength' a contradiction in terms? Has 'arms-control' been just another name for the arms race?

I don't agree with either of these alternatives. It seems to me that balance between the superpowers has been achieved over a period of years, because the Russians have caught up. Beforehand you had just as good a deterrent from the Western point of view, because the Americans had an enormous superiority and were invulnerable. As they didn't intend to use their nuclear weapons in a first strike, but only if the Russians did anything disagreeable, you had a very reasonable nuclear deterrent. Now the Russians have caught up, so you have a nuclear balance. It's not a question of whether you want a nuclear balance.

As to the question of arms control, both sides have a different idea of balance. The role of arms control has been to codify two different perceptions and two different force structures. Within these parameters, I think that, apart from the fact that critics can make the case that numbers in certain areas have increased, they have overall established a framework that has been helpful.
(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

Certainly not the latter, but not entirely the former either. It's a sort of grey area, isn't it? There undoubtedly are pressures from inventors and technologists and the military, but they are held in political check in the West and are on the whole under political control. There has been an overall discipline about force requirements, and so on, in NATO. It may be that the greater relative strength of the military within the Soviet Union and the large sums of money available, mean that there the momentum is held less closely under political restraint – I wouldn't know.

2. The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

What you have to do here, I think, is separate two questions. If you are asking 'is there a greater technical capacity to effect a first strike?', then the arguments that there may be such a capacity are probably fairly convincing as far as they go – although that debate is full of uncertainties. But if you are asking 'is it more likely that someone is going to try this?', then you are in a completely different area, and I would have said definitely 'no'.

You cannot say that it is 'inconceivable' that someone might try this, because you never know what political developments there may be in any country – Mr Gorbachev might be unexpectedly replaced by a more extreme figure, perhaps slightly deranged, and believing that he has a first-strike weapon that can give him superiority. But this remains highly improbable.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? OR Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

Once again it can be argued that there are technological developments that could threaten the survivability of command, control and communications facilities. But I don't see any particular development making that happen. In any case, the more worried people get, the more careful they are going to be. And that, as I have said before, is in general a good thing.

As to inadvertent war, it remains, or should remain, a major objective of the arms control process to make this less likely. It has already done quite a lot in that direction.
I find this sort of question absolutely impossible to answer. All I can do is give you my view of deterrence. To begin with the Americans had an overwhelming superiority. First of all, they were the only people who had nuclear weapons. Then there was a period when they had the ability to wipe out the Soviet Union and they were almost invulnerable. But now that you have got a balance, the only thing that makes deterrence credible is uncertainty. Since you can never get certainty, what you actually want is uncertainty. We are not going to be the aggressors; but we want to leave in the mind of the Soviet Union a real doubt as to what would happen if they were to attack us. That's why a declaration of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons is a bad idea: it makes it easier for the Kremlin to calculate the costs of military adventure.

So, from the point of view of nuclear deterrence, it's a good thing that there is doubt as to whether a nuclear exchange be limited. The difficulty with these sorts of things is that you are arguing on two levels. You are arguing first of all about deterrence, and then those represented by the questions on the right are arguing about what you would do if deterrence failed. And the two things are not the same. The aim is to make it as difficult as possible for deterrence to fail - to make it so difficult that deterrence doesn't fail.

It is not the modernization of theatre nuclear weapons that lowers the nuclear threshold, but the weakening of conventional capabilities. If theatre nuclear forces are modernized as part of a response to a qualitatively new threat, then they reinforce deterrence. It is failure to meet that threat which would undermine your deterrent abilities.

How on earth can we know this until we know what it can do? All we can do at this stage is to speculate about the possible implications. For example, if you had a system which you thought would work and you deployed it by agreement with the Soviet Union, and at the same time substantially reduced your offensive weapons, I think that everybody would say that that would be stabilizing. But we can also imagine possibilities that would be destabilizing. Both the Soviet Union and the United States are engaged in this area of research, but none of us can know yet what the possibilities will be, so we cannot answer these questions. Find out what you can do, and what the consequences would be, before you make your decision whether or not to carry on and deploy.
(vi) Is the threat of ‘horizontal’ nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

I would rather not see further proliferation, but it is not what the great powers do along these lines that will be decisive. I suspect that what determines the attitude of, say, the Argentinians and Brazilians, or the Indians and Pakistanis, depends much more on Argentina/Brazil or India/Pakistan than on anything the great powers are doing. But the conference rhetoric is of course rather different. In this kind of forum, where the great powers may be trying to campaign against nuclear proliferation, it may be diplomatically helpful if they can say ‘look, we are cutting down our arsenals’ – but it’s no more than that.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is ‘arms-control’ an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

I think that current bilateral and multilateral negotiations will produce worthwhile measures of disarmament.

The ‘alternative school’ appear to recommend unilateral concessions in the hope that the Soviet Union will reciprocate, but they never explain why this should happen, or what we should do if it doesn’t.

Even if the Soviet Union did reciprocate, it would only be with the coin that they had offered in existing negotiations, and that would almost certainly be an unsatisfactory bargain from the Western point of view. It might well be that they would offer even less than this, and extremely unlikely that they would offer more.

Take the example of chemical weapons. The Americans did in effect unilaterally disarm for seventeen years, when they made it plain to the Russians that they were not going to produce more chemical weapons. Meanwhile, the Russians continued to maintain enormous stocks of 350,000 tons of these beastly things, and saw no reason to behave differently.

When you pin the critics down in private and say ‘are you a unilateral disarmer?’ many of them say ‘no’. But they are reluctant to say so in public, or to explain what the alternatives are.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely? OR Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?

If you believe, as I do, that nuclear deterrence has played a part in preventing a third world war, then to remove it is to increase the danger that there will be one. Without nuclear deterrence, you have a very large preponderance of conventional weapons and superiority for the Warsaw Pact over NATO. Whatever they may sometimes say, advocates of unilateral nuclear disarma-
ment for the West are certainly not prepared to put more money into conventional weapons. Does that fill you with confidence?

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war? OR Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?

A major conventional war would, indeed, be appalling. I have fought in one. It was very nasty. The next would probably be worse.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out? OR As with nerve gases in the last war, would there be no incentive to resort to capabilities which the other side has as well?

I don’t know. This is all hypothetical, and it’s not going to happen.

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility? OR Is to argue that even multilateral nuclear disarmament is not desirable to give up all hope of a rational world-order?

Let’s be practical about this. You are not going to get ‘global nuclear disarmament’. What you may get is a very much lower level of weaponry, which would make everybody feel better, including me.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely? OR Do the years before 1914 show what happens when military planning and the arms race control political choices? Do present strategies make nuclear war almost inevitable under likely future conditions? Is global nuclear disarmament the only rational policy?

The suggestion on the right that there is an arms race galloping out of control is wrong. But the other side isn’t the whole answer either, because it’s all too compressed.

B. Nato Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? OR Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

This depends upon a number of factors. For example, which forces you count, which area, whether both sides mobilize at the same time and so on. Under the right circumstances we would hope to do reasonably well, but reinforcement would be a critical factor. However, all theorizing apart, let’s just say that, whether you like it or not – and I don’t – they have the capacity to do a great deal more than we can.
(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power or Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?

No one can say for certain what their intentions are. A simple analogy helps to make the point: if there is an elephant in the next-door garden, you have a fence to protect your flower beds. You do not spend a lot of time trying to find out what the elephant's intentions are.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? or Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

I have really already answered this, because we are back to the question of uncertainty. But let me be clear, we do not threaten anything — all we say is that we maintain the option to use nuclear weapons if and when necessary if we are attacked.

And once again we are arguing on two levels. I am arguing from the point of view of deterrence: making it clear to the elephant that he cannot be sure what we would do if he trampled down the fence, in order to deter him and keep him off the flower bed. Critics ask what would happen if deterrence failed tomorrow morning. If I were to try to reassure them in the way they want, I would be undermining the deterrent which is designed to prevent that from happening.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing? or Does the West initiate nearly all phases of the nuclear arms race and continue to enjoy a substantial lead in most areas? Is the nuclear 'overkill' such that the West could offer a nuclear 'freeze' or unconditional cuts without risk?

What is important here is the change in composition of Soviet nuclear forces, not so much the growth in size. If there is a qualitative change on the other side, you reassure people by adjusting accordingly, so that we are seen to have the ability to respond. Although the SS20s in a way replaced the SS4s and SS5s that were already there, they seemed to be a different kind of threat and Europeans did find them that degree more terrifying. If the other side is getting qualitatively stronger and you do nothing, for long enough, you undermine your deterrent abilities, so that in that sort of situation modernization reinforces deterrence. And at the same time, by the way, you strengthen Transatlantic linkage.

As to the idea of a 'freeze', I can't see why people are so keen on it. It seems to me that it's much better to get reductions than to freeze the thing at the wrong levels; and we would do much better to concentrate on reductions.
(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence? I fail to see how people can use the term 'provocative' to describe our capabilities. It's idiotic to call it 'provocative' if you hit back when the other side starts a war. Everything we say and do points to a defensive strategy. Forward defence cannot be called provocative. It's just that West German territory is relatively small and understandably they don't want it sacrificed. If it were not for forward defence, our forces might look slightly different, but neither posture is provocative. And 'emerging technology' has nothing to do with it.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported? OR Is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone? The left-hand side is right. The right-hand side is partly wrong, partly unrealistic. People tend to forget that an independent Western European defence could have serious and potentially dangerous consequences. A European defence force capable of defending itself against the Soviet Union would, among other things, mean Western Europe building up quite a large strategic nuclear force; and then the Soviet Union might see itself facing two very powerful, potential opponents and count them together and respond accordingly. So all you would be doing would be to build up an arms race.

If the Americans did decide to go home, you would probably find it very difficult to get the Europeans to take their own defence seriously. But the Americans have no intention of pulling out, not so much because they love us, but because it's in their own interest to stay. There are, of course, Americans who question this; and others who complain about how much they do to defend Europe. But that's not the whole story, because it is also their own interests they are defending.

As for a European nuclear weapon-free zone, it's all part of goodwill flabbiness. Whatever you might declare yourself to be, the Soviet Union would retain systems targeted on Western Europe. And if you are nevertheless prepared to believe Soviet assurances that they would not target you if you were a nuclear weapon-free zone, why not believe them when they say that they will never use their conventional weapons against you either? Why bother about defence at all? The idea of a European nuclear weapon-free zone is meaningless – except, of course, to those other countries who would be left shouldering the burden and responsibility for Western defence.
Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

Those who talk about radical Western unilateral disarmament concessions are not talking about defence. They are talking about giving in – whatever they may say. Some of these people may have ulterior political motives, but many are well-intentioned people, whose main aim is to avoid war, but who do not understand that the only way in which this can be done is through the kind of deterrence that we have been discussing here.

C. British Policy

1. The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?

There are so many strands to this whole question that one can't just answer 'yes' or 'no'. I think that there's a very powerful feeling in Britain in favour of keeping a British nuclear capability. Perhaps a greater number supportive of our own deterrent than of American bases.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making?

Then there is the question of ensuring European defence in the longer term. What would happen if in ten, fifteen or twenty years' time, the Americans thought that we were no longer sufficiently interested in defending ourselves, and decided to pull out of Europe? Where would that leave us? We need to keep a European nuclear option open in case that eventuality is forced on us. Other Western Europeans are in favour of the British nuclear force, incidentally.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it?

This is a factor that is usually neglected. The Americans actually like having
the French and British nuclear deterrents, because to some extent it absolves them from having total responsibility for these things. Do you think that they are allowing us Trident because of our bright blue eyes? No. They want to feel that others are prepared to share the responsibility.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? Can Britain’s nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

It depends how much you’re prepared to pay for your own national sovereign independence. If you are not prepared to pay, and want something else instead, that’s your business. Although there is a lot of talk about cheaper alternatives, I very much doubt that there are any. Of course, it all depends how effective you want your deterrent to be.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

British unilateral nuclear disarmament would have virtually no effect on other countries who might be considering taking up the nuclear option. And it would have no effect on the Soviet Union, either. We are told that the Soviet Union is willing to reduce by the number we reduce by. What does this amount to? I suspect that it is really double counting. Suppose that the British reduce by a hundred and the Russians go down by a hundred. But the Russians then continue to insist on parity with the Americans in their negotiations with them, so that the hundred that have been ‘sold’ to us are double counted and are sold to the Americans as well. We would only get a real trade-off if the Americans and the Russians reach agreement and established parity first, and then the Russians were prepared to reduce by an extra hundred in response to a corresponding British reduction. That is not a very likely thing for the Russians to do.

In addition to this, we must ask whether it would be a good thing from a European point of view, if we were to give up a British nuclear capability. I think most of our Allies are happier if we and the French both share this particular burden.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

We need Trident for all of the reasons I have already given. Despite the cost, it is still relatively cheap for the job it will do.
2. NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance?

Britain must indeed continue to share responsibility for her own defence. And this includes her involvement in manning nuclear systems in Germany, and so on.

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?

I think that the removal of American nuclear bases from Britain would do more than make the defence of the West much more difficult. It would put the Alliance under tremendous strain. If the Americans found that one of their major Allies had gone unilateral, then it would really call in question the whole basis upon which the Americans take part in this Alliance. It would also make life very difficult for the Germans, and others. I think it would have very serious implications indeed, for our security and for that of our allies.

Turning to the right-hand side, of course any alliance or association will make some difference to you, because you have to accommodate the views of other people. But there has certainly not been an ‘erosion of British sovereignty’. The British Prime Minister could have said ‘no’ to the use of bases in Britain for the bombing of Libya. People often forget that it is just as likely (or unlikely) that we would drag the Americans into something, as that they would drag us in. It works both ways.

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally?

What do you think? Of course Britain would go on being targeted. The idea that by going ‘non-nuclear’ you can turn yourself into a sanctuary in these circumstances is illusory. I just don’t believe it.

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella?

I do indeed think that if you did this you would just be taking an easy ride. I
agree with what is said on the left. As to the right-hand side – it’s so silly, I have no further comment to make.

**Moral Considerations**

I am neither a theologian nor a philosopher, and I suspect that one would have to be both to do justice to the many questions in this section. Instead of addressing them one-by-one, let me try to say briefly how I look at the question as a whole.

As I see it, the main job of the Alliance is to prevent our countries from being attacked or effectively blackmailed by a militarily very strong and nuclear-armed power, whose own conception of morality is, to say the least, very different from our own. I am satisfied that this job could not be done without there being nuclear weapons also on the Western side.

Those who imply that it might be all right to have nuclear weapons, provided that we made it clear that we would never use them, are not solving the moral problem, but evading it: if your potential opponent were sure that you would never use them, they would be useless as a deterrent to aggression or as a counter to nuclear blackmail; if, on the other hand, you secretly hoped that he would remain uncertain as to whether or not you would use them, you would be making present allied strategy less clear – and I would say less effective – but morally no different.

The points to remember are that:

(i) The purpose of our nuclear weapons is to deter war and counter nuclear blackmail;
(ii) We have succeeded in doing both;
(iii) We shall never use any of our weapons unless we are attacked;
(iv) If deterrence failed, and we were attacked, it would be for our political leaders to decide whether or not to use nuclear weapons; and the moral considerations would of course weigh very heavily on their minds;
(v) Meanwhile, we shall continue to do everything we can to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on both sides.

If nuclear weapons did not exist, or could be disinvented, we wouldn’t have these difficult moral questions to answer. But, as things are, I think that our policy is morally justified; and I would certainly question a morality which appeared to suggest that we should leave a monopoly of nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union.

**Recommendations**

NOTE. The unqualified ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers below represent the editor’s reading of what Lord Carrington would say, if he had to reply in one word. It should be understood that Lord Carrington himself would no doubt have wanted to expand, and perhaps qualify, some of them.
1. No (see B(iv)).
2. No (see A2(A)(v)).
3. We are not at present in a position where a CTB could be signed with a sufficient degree of confidence in the verification regime, or of certainty about its implications for the credibility of our deterrent.
4. No (see A2(A)(iii)).
5. There should be deep, but not unconditional, cuts: this needs to be done by negotiation, and with effective provisions for verification (see A1(iv)).
6. No (see B(vi)).
7. Yes (see A2(A)(vi)).
8. No (see A2(B)).
9. Does not apply.
10. No (see A2(A)(V)).
11. No (see A2(A)(iii)).
12. No (see B(vii)).
13. No (see C1).
14. No (see B(vi)).
15. No (see B(vi)).
16. No (see C1).
17. Does not apply.
18. No (see C2(i)).
19. No (see C2(i) & (ii)).
20. Does not apply.
Biographical Note

Born in 1915, Lord Carver won the D.S.O. and the Military Cross in the Second World War, at the end of which he was commanding the Fourth Armoured Brigade. Subsequently he served as Commander-in-Chief, Far East, between 1967 and 1969; G.O.C., Southern Command, between 1969 and 1971; Chief of General Staff between 1971 and 1973; and Chief of the Defence Staff between 1973 and 1976.
Among his other publications is *A Policy for Peace*, published by Faber and Faber in 1982, where a fuller exposition of his thinking can be found.

**Editorial Comment**

Communicated during an interview at his home in Hampshire on February 19th, 1986, this set of answers represents the response of an experienced man of action, who has held high military command for a number of years, and is well known for the radical nature of his thinking about military strategy. In the spirit of Clausewitz, Lord Carver goes back to first principles in his criticism of NATO 'flexible response' policies as they have evolved over the past twenty or thirty years, and suggests ways in which this could be remedied. His aim is to re-establish a sound basis to military thinking, so that the threat of force is once again clearly related to political purpose through a coherent strategy for its possible use. Lord Carver's criticisms of current policy, particularly evident here in sections A1, A2(A), B, and C1, have been widely influential within the peace movements. Less popular in those quarters has been his defence of the principle of strategic nuclear deterrence, as expounded in sections A2(B), and C2.

**FIELD MARSHAL LORD CARVER**

**A Global Policy**

1 **The History of the Past Forty Years**

(i) *Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?*

   My answer is that it has not by any means been nuclear deterrence alone that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945 – although that has been a very important factor.

(ii) *Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?*

   Mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike nuclear force is indeed important in preventing the use of nuclear weapons by either of the great nuclear powers, and also in helping to prevent major war between them, because of the inherent fear on both sides that a clash between their military forces could eventually lead to an exchange of nuclear weapons. That is why I do not want to see nuclear weapons abolished altogether.

   But the essential link in all this is the physical presence of the conventional forces of the nuclear powers in the area. If there were no US airforce or army
forces stationed in Europe, then, although the Soviet Union would still very seriously have to consider the risk of nuclear retaliation, she might nevertheless judge that limited action in, say, West Germany could be possible.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has ‘flexible response’ dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

It is, as I have said, the physical presence of United States armed forces on the ground and in the air that is the important link – far more essential to my mind than the presence of American nuclear delivery systems in Europe.

In response to the statement on the left, I should say ‘no’: limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels have not enhanced deterrence since the time the Soviet Union has had the capacity to answer back at every level.

As to the statement on the right – yes, I do think that it is dangerous. Military planners have indeed been aiming for war-fighting superiority, whether in terms of pure counter-force nuclear weapons strategies or more general war-fighting strategies which include the use of nuclear weapons. This is bound to be so once you try to produce military arguments to justify the existence of these weapons. It’s probably even more applicable to the Soviet Union than it is to the other side.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

The answer is that it is the constant change in the size and variety of nuclear arsenals that has tended to be destabilizing – although as a result of what has been done by both sides the situation is fairly stable at the moment. But, turning to the question on the right-hand side – yes, this has generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems. Undoubtedly. Particularly in the field of counter-force systems. And the principal threat to stability that both sides see is the fear that their static land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, on which they both rely heavily, could be preemptively destroyed by the other. That’s the principal destabilizing element and it’s the principal element in the escalation in the numbers of warheads.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

If arms control is significant here – and it’s something I’m beginning to doubt – then it is as part of the attempt to achieve the lowest possible level of strategic
balance of forces. At the time of SALT I Henry Kissinger saw clearly (and I was arguing this with General Abrahamson only yesterday over SDI) that, if both sides continued in the way they were going, they would have to devote more and more effort to their strategic nuclear systems, and the result would not in fact enhance the security of either. He realized that you have got to try to find something which is clearly in the self-interest of both sides to follow— as when the Russians and Americans agreed to control nuclear testing in order to prevent proliferation. He wanted to bring about a situation in which both sides recognized this, and in the first instance stopped where they were, and then agreed to move downwards, as it were, almost back to the 1945–1950 state of affairs.

Turning to the statement on the right, I wouldn't say that 'arms control' has just been 'another name for the arms race'— what I would say, though, is that as yet it has shown hardly any promise of limiting the numbers and variety of nuclear weapons. It has so far proved impossible to achieve what Kissinger wanted because of mutual mistrust. Some kind of balance at reduced levels depends on confidence on both sides that each is in fact attempting to pursue the target and not attempting to evade it—and that's very difficult to achieve. But it's not impossible.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

I would have said that on balance, as Solly Zuckerman has pointed out in a number of different articles, it has definitely been the impetus of technology and vested interest on both sides of the Iron Curtain dictating policies, which have then been justified afterwards.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

The threat of an enemy first strike is obviously not inconceivable, because, as long as both sides maintain weapons systems which are clearly designed for first strike, the threat remains. All counter-force systems are by definition first strike weapons, because there is no point in firing at the other side's weapons system after it has itself been fired. Therefore you must strike first. There is also no doubt that a combination of MIRVs and of greater accuracy makes the threat of a strike against a static land-based missile system more difficult to counter than it was before—although of course a solid fuel powered missile in a deep silo is more difficult to destroy.

1. Director of the Strategic Defence Initiative Office.
Both the Soviet Union and the United States maintain that they would never be the first to make a strategic nuclear strike. But both at the same time argue that they must nevertheless retain that capability, in case they come to the conclusion that the other is about to do so — and if they do come to that conclusion, then they will have to strike first! So each is a reflection of the other. If they would only go for systems that were mobile or very difficult to detect, like long-range submarine ballistic missile systems, they would not have the problem.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

Command and control systems are, on the contrary, likely to become more secure in future even than they are now, I think. In the days when you had liquid fuelled systems to get ready to fire and almost archaic communications networks which were extremely vulnerable, not only to electronic but also to physical counter-measures, there was a much greater danger of inadvertent war. But now, with the astonishing advances that there have been in micro-electronics, seventy-five percent of your communications can be knocked out and the system will still work perfectly well.

By far the most important confidence-building measure that has ever been introduced, by the way, has been mutual acquiescence by each side in the ability of the other to observe activity from space — and the greatest possible danger would come if either threatened to do away with the other’s observation satellites.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end hostilities swiftly? Is the idea that nuclear war could be limited once it had broken out a dangerous illusion?

There is absolutely no likelihood that a limited nuclear exchange would be likely to end hostilities swiftly. The one clear distinction that can be made in this whole field is that between the use and the non-use of nuclear weapons. Almost everybody, including people like Harold Brown and others, agrees that once you have used nuclear weapons there is no knowing where it will lead — you just cannot calculate what the other side’s reaction is going to be. Indeed, you can’t even calculate what your own side’s reaction is going to be.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence? Do new battlefield and theatre weapons threaten a dangerous lowering of the nuclear threshold?

So far as concerns the question on the left, I can’t see how new theatre systems make the slightest difference to deterrence. For example, the fact that the Pershing II has got a longer range than the Pershing I doesn’t alter the characteristics of the system. The Soviet authorities are fussed because it is

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now possible to reach the Soviet Union from Western Europe, but submarine-based missiles could do this before anyway. As for the Cruise missile, it worries the Soviet Union because, although it would not be difficult to devise a defence against it, this would be very expensive. But once again it doesn't make any difference to deterrence. I would like the Cruise missile restricted to non-nuclear warheads and used for all those missions other than very short range ones for which NATO now thinks it wants to employ manned aircraft. Half the problem for NATO over the past twenty years has been to find targets for its nuclear weapons!

So far as the right-hand side goes, it's things like enhanced radiation weapons, which everyone has almost forgotten about now, that would indeed lower the nuclear threshold and for that reason be very dangerous. It would increase the pressure from the military on the President to agree to the initial use of nuclear warheads.

v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? OR Is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in t?

In response to these questions you have to consider what the aim of the Strategic Defence Initiative is and that has never been clear.

First there is the President's vision of making nuclear weapons obsolete, or, a little less ambitious, of defending the whole of the United States. The critical target here is said to be that ninety-five per cent of all warheads launched should be intercepted and destroyed: that is a very stringent test. In any case even five per cent of the present deliverable stock of Soviet warheads would do untold damage. And no-one is suggesting that anything like this will apply, say, to Europe.

Then we must consider whether a lower target is something worth getting involved in – for example, just the protection of the US delivery systems themselves. The sophisticated argument used here by the state department, the defence department, the arms control agency and everybody else who is involved, when they can agree among themselves, is to invoke Paul Nitze's criteria: that SDI will enhance deterrence by making the system more survivable and therefore more stable, and will also make it more cost-effective than the alternative continuing escalation in offensive systems. This takes us right back to all the arguments why at the time of the ABM treaty the US, correctly in my opinion, decided not to go ahead with ABM systems. I challenged General Abrahamson with this yesterday. I asked him why he thought that there was going to be a totally different result from what the whole history of weapons development has shown, which is that the moment one side begins to improve its defence the other improves its offence, and so on. This is exactly the sort of situation that Henry Kissinger foresaw which impelled him into arms control talks. So I believe it's a wrong road to follow.

1. Chief United States arms negotiator for many years.
Field Marshal Lord Carver, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

(vi) Is the threat of ‘horizontal’ nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

I find this a difficult question to answer because, although I can’t, in theory, see why mutual possession of nuclear weapons by, say, Iran and Iraq shouldn’t prevent war between them, nevertheless I think that a world in which a great many people had nuclear weapons would be less safe. So I am in general against proliferation. But although there’s a lot of talk to the effect that continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers encourages proliferation, I don’t think that decisions taken by countries like South Africa, Israel, South Korea, Argentina or anybody else to develop or not to develop a nuclear weapon is going to be determined by how many the Soviet Union, the United States, we, the French or the Chinese have; nor do I think that if we suddenly decided tomorrow to give up all our nuclear weapons it would make anybody else give them up.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is ‘arms-control’ an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy—nuclear disarmament?

I fall back here on what Michael Howard never tires of saying which is that it is policies which matter, not arms control negotiations. It is the policy adopted by the West towards the Soviet Union and vice versa which is significant. If policies are sensible, you might get sensible answers in other fields. In particular it might be possible for each side to realize at last that it is in their mutual interest first of all to give up these wretched static land-based systems (the Russians will be particularly reluctant to do this), and secondly to do away with the battlefield systems which NATO has tended to pioneer. If we could get rid of these two we would be half way to solving the problem and eliminating the main areas of proliferation. But if both sides go on feeling that arms control negotiations are a threat and that the only way to conduct them is by negotiating from strength, then we might well be better off without them.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely? OR Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?

I do not share the President’s vision and I find it hypocritical of the British government to claim in successive White Papers that its aim is total and complete nuclear disarmament. My answer is, therefore, that, if nuclear arsenals were dismantled, war between major industrial nations would indeed appear to become a rational option again.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war? OR Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?
Depending upon a number of factors a major conventional war in Europe, if it lasted any length of time, would create terrible destruction, but nothing comparable to a limited nuclear war.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out?

But the fact remains that even if through international agreement, nuclear weapons had somehow or other been eliminated, and some sort of international inspection had verified this (though I have no idea how), the moment hostilities did start it would not be long before they reappeared. Even schoolboys now know how to make them.

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility?

On the right hand side – in a way this is what both the Soviet Union and the United States are professing that they want. So what’s to stop it? It would certainly be far cheaper than the Strategic Defence Initiative! But the fact is that I can’t imagine a world where war itself is no longer a possibility.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely?

As I have said I do think that global nuclear disarmament would make war, including nuclear war, more likely. But the continuing proliferation of nuclear weapons systems is unnecessary and dangerous. The only rational policy would therefore be one in which, among other things, nuclear arsenals were reduced to the minimum strategic force needed for effective mutual deterrence – preferably in the form of long range submarine ballistic missile systems.

B. NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe?

In terms of conventional arms within the European theatre the Soviet Union enjoys a considerable superiority in numbers of land forces and air forces but is inferior in naval forces. And there is no doubt that the Soviets can, as they did in the Second World War, develop the most enormous conventional
military power. But the presence of United States ground and air forces in
Europe, together with her undoubted capacity to inflict enormous damage on
the Soviet Union, to my mind means that there is a stable strategic balance.
Of course, if NATO's conventional forces became so weak that the Soviet
Union thought that it could achieve a swift result and present the other side
with a fait accompli, particularly if it didn't involve any direct hostilities against
United States forces, well, then that might be another matter.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power or Is the Soviet Union an encircled and
which will take advantage of unilateral threatened power trying to keep up with
Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control
agreements by Western determination and strength?

This is a very interesting question because, in territorial terms, I don't think
that the Soviet Union's history shows it to be an expansionist power at all.
What lies at the heart of the problem and makes the whole thing so difficult
is that the Soviet Union believes in and propagates an ideological, cultural,
political, social and economic theory of how society should be organized which
is in total opposition to the capitalist democratic West. They, like us, would
like to see as many countries as possible turn in their direction. But they have
in many ways been more cautious than we have in setting about it – and
extraordinarily unsuccessful too.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? or Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

I don't think that the question of chemical weapons is so important. So far as
redressing any conventional imbalance goes, reliance on the early use of nuclear weapons is simply no answer. The facts of the matter are that, if
NATO initiated the use of nuclear weapons, it would suffer proportionately
much more damage than the Warsaw Pact and its forces, so it would be cutting
off its nose to spite its face.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing? or Does the West initiate nearly all phases of the nuclear arms race and continue to enjoy a substantial lead in most areas? Is the nuclear 'overkill' such that the West could offer a nuclear 'freeze' or unconditional cuts without risk?

I don't think that the theatre balance matters at all. I don't go along with this constant German fear of decoupling – that if you don't have American nuclear delivery systems based on land in Europe then the Soviet Union might think that it could invade Western Europe without receiving anything nuclear in reply. A fraction of the present Soviet nuclear arsenal could wipe out the whole
of Europe tomorrow, so that adding or subtracting a few warheads doesn't make the slightest difference. The number of SS2Os that they have is completely irrelevant.

I'm against freezes, because you begin to argue about what you're going to freeze, and then you can't give anything up because you've frozen it. I favour unconditional cuts. That's the better way.

(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence? OR Should NATO exploit her lead in 'emerging technology' to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

The important thing about emerging technologies in terms of warheads, delivery systems and, above all, target acquisitioning is that it makes it much more possible for you to have a non-nuclear way of dealing with the other side's forces, particularly his threatened superiority in conventional weapons, than you had before - which is a very good thing. It could free you to a certain extent from overdependence on first use of nuclear weapons.

Forward defence on the other hand is forced on NATO for German political reasons. The Federal Republic is not prepared to sacrifice great stretches of land in order to play for time. If it wasn't for this, we would adopt a military posture in greater depth for good military reasons.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? OR Is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

I think that this is the heart of the matter. It is absolutely essential both that American troops remain in Europe and that the United States should maintain an effective strategic nuclear deterrent. But there's a great exaggeration of the need for a whole series of steps in the nuclear ladder. Since NATO would suffer more than the other side, the question is raised whether we need theatre nuclear forces at all. To my mind the only valid function of theatre nuclear forces now is to make it absolutely clear to the Soviet Union that it could not itself employ nuclear weapons in Europe with impunity. It is a retaliatory and not a first use function.

But it makes no sense to talk about 'decoupling' Europe from the super-power nuclear confrontation, or to recommend a nuclear weapon-free zone, when the Soviet Union will retain any number of means of delivering nuclear weapons which don't depend upon what you call theatre nuclear systems.
Field Marshal Lord Carver, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

Unilateral initiatives are not the only way to reverse the arms race, but I do think that they are probably the best way. If we have decided in Western Europe that we don't need certain systems, it is probably much better for us to say, as we have done in certain cases, that we are going to give them up and hope that the other side would do the same, but that we are not going to get involved in an argument about reciprocity or verifiability. Of course, this would not necessarily mean that the other side would give up theirs straight away – although it might persuade them that it wasn't worth their while developing successor systems.

So far as the questions on the left-hand side go, if for example we and the French were to decide to give up our nuclear weapons tomorrow, it wouldn't make the slightest difference to what the Soviet Union did, as long as we were prepared to go on manning NATO delivery systems with American nuclear warheads. If, on the other hand, all the European members of NATO were to turn to the US and say that they would no longer go on manning these systems, that would be a shattering blow to NATO, would make it more likely that the Americans would wash their hands of Europe, and, in the event, would indeed lay Europe open to Soviet blackmail.

C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?

The left-hand side represents an instinctive response that has been there from the start. If all else fails, we can stand on our own feet. It's what Margaret Thatcher and Heseltine have said and is sometimes heard running around the Ministry of Defence. But it doesn't make sense, and in any case is not an argument you can put forward in front of your allies, because it implies that you have let Europe be overrun without doing anything about it with your nuclear weapons.
(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making? OR Is the ‘second centre of decision making’ an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

This is the theory put forward by the government in its official paper ‘The Future of the British Strategic Deterrent’ when Francis Pym was Minister of Defence. It’s exactly the opposite of the ‘last resort’ argument, because it implies, absurdly, that even though the Russians might think that the Americans would hesitate to use nuclear weapons for fear of retaliation against their cities, they would believe that the British would be happy to sacrifice their cities for the sake of Europe. British independent nuclear forces are of no value to European allies, and this ‘second centre’ argument implies mistrust of the Americans.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? OR Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

British nuclear forces guarantee nothing. The only thing the American like about it is that there are other people besides themselves who can share the odium of having these weapons. They are also afraid that an anti-nuclear movement in this country could affect them.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? OR Can Britain’s nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

In answer to the left-hand side: since I don’t believe that it plays a vital defence rôle at all, you don’t need an ‘alternative’. Turning to the right-hand side: it’s bound to be at the expense of conventional strength – as long as the money set aside is to be spent on defence as it should be.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

I think that I have already answered this. I don’t believe that whether or not Britain keeps an independent nuclear force makes much difference to anybody else. If the French want to waste their money on these things let them.
(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? or Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

It is the cohesion, self-confidence and general strength of NATO that is essential for British strategic defence, not an independent nuclear force. On the other hand, if you did think that an independent nuclear force was important, then there can be little doubt that Trident is the best answer. David Owen’s recommendation of alternatives is just equivocation. My only argument against Trident is that it’s a waste of money.

2 NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? or Should British obligations to NATO be met by strengthening conventional forces where necessary within an overall non-nuclear strategy as recommended in B?

I would certainly say ‘yes’ to the left-hand side.

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible? or Do the large numbers of nuclear facilities yielded to the US erode British sovereignty? Would their removal do no more than restore a normal peacetime relationship?

What really matters is what the Germans do – they’re the people who really matter – although of course the forced removal of American nuclear bases from Britain would be an extremely serious blow to NATO. If we were neutral, US defence of the West would still be physically possible, but politically this would threaten the total break-up of NATO.

As for American interference in British affairs – I should say that as far as defence is concerned it’s negligible, but it appears that in economic affairs it’s quite considerable!

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally? or Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any superpower confrontation unless bases are removed?

Because Soviet nuclear delivery systems are primarily targeted against American nuclear delivery systems in Europe, we are less likely to be targeted if we don’t have American nuclear delivery bases in this country. This is one of the arguments for having them at sea. I can’t see the argument for having these things on land. It’s a question of persuading the Germans of this.
(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US 'umbrella' than any other Western ally – or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

Ideally we would have American ground troops in Europe and then submarine-based nuclear forces. It is perfectly possible to have a valid theatre nuclear weapons system under the aegis of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) that is based at sea. All theatre systems should be totally detached from the land, airforce and navy organizations and held under very tight separate control by the Supreme Allied Commanders. This would get Margaret Thatcher off the hook – there would be no land-based nuclear delivery systems and British nuclear forces would be assigned to NATO, which is what we have always said is their primary purpose. I would drop the independent strategic side to it. But in the meantime Britain must be prepared to man NATO nuclear delivery systems.

Moral Considerations

(i) Is it morally right to pursue the policy least OR Are there actions which are in themselves likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong?

(ii) In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies? OR Is the only relevant point here that a nuclear exchange of almost any kind would in itself cause unimaginable suffering to largely civilian populations?

I'm not very good on morals, but taking the right-hand side first, I think that there are actions which are wrong in themselves – shooting a man in cold blood when he's helpless is a thing which is wrong no matter what the situation. There is no doubt that a nuclear exchange would cause terrible suffering to civilian populations and I think that Mgr O'Brien made an important point when he said to me once that, although it may in certain circumstances be moral to kill someone in order to prevent him from killing your wife, it is not moral to kill him in revenge afterwards – so a retaliatory second strike would be morally wrong. But all of life is a matter of very difficult judgement – usually between two conflicting evils, not between right and wrong.

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use? OR Is there no such thing as a fully deployed weapons system which is a bluff? Is to deploy nuclear weapons to intend to use them in certain circumstances?

This is very difficult. Our response must be at any rate to try to reduce the
thing so that the smallest possible number are employed. But there is no doubt that to deploy and man these systems is to be prepared to use them in certain circumstances.

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence? OR Is a conditional intention to cause indiscriminate and disproportionate suffering of this kind, whether admonitory, preemptive or retaliatory, ruled out by Just War theory? Was it wrong to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945?

What was wrong in the cases of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was to drop the bombs on cities. But at the time it was greeted with relief and didn't seem to be so different to other things that had been going on.

But the fact remains that now, particularly with the introduction of the fusion weapon, there is absolutely no means of ensuring what you have started off is going to remain at that level.

Question: So there are circumstances in which you could be morally justified in using your presumably retaliatory submarine-based nuclear force?
Answer: I think that's frightfully difficult.

Question: But, if you can't use it, don't you get to the stage where you ask what the point of it is?
Answer: Yes you do. The whole thing begins to unravel.

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and world poverty and disease? OR Is it a scandal that such huge resources are devoted to the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and not to the alleviation of suffering?

This has nothing to do with it. Don't tell me for one moment that the money being spent by any of the nations on their nuclear weapons systems would be used for alleviating suffering in this way – except possibly in their own country.

(vi) Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons? OR Does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?

Christian teaching condemns all killing. So that finishes that one.

Recommendations

1 No (See B(iv)).
2 Yes (See A2 (A) (ii) & (v)).
3 Not 'at once', because of the need to go on testing to make warheads safer and cleaner. But, as part of a general agreement on the reduction of warheads, 'yes'.
4 Yes. But, if counter-force systems are retained, this will not prevent their preemptive use when it is thought that the other side is about to strike (See A2(A)(i) & B(iii) & B(vi)).
5 Yes (See AI(iv) & AI(v) & A2(A)(vii)).
6 So far as concerns Europe – No (See B(vi)).
7 Yes (See A2(A)(vi)).
8 No (See AI(ii) & A2(B)).
9 This should be a permanent arrangement (See A2(B)).
10 Yes (See A2(A)(v)).
11 See 4.
12 Unconditional cuts, Yes; a freeze, No (See B(iv)).
13 Yes (See esp. CI(v) & C2(iv)).
14 No (See B(vi)).
15 See 6.
16 Yes. Alternatively, assign it to NATO in its entirety, and drop the independent strategic side to it (See C2(iv)).
17 Yes (See CI(iv)).
18 No (See C2(i)).
19 No (See C2(i) & C2(ii)).
20 Does not apply.
Biographical Note

Group Captain Cheshire is well known for two main reasons. First, because he was awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery after one hundred operations as a bomber pilot in the Second World War. Second, because of the work he has since done in founding homes for the sick and disabled. Beginning with the conversion of his own house into the first Cheshire Home soon after the
war, the enterprise has progressed to the point where there are now seventy-five Cheshire Homes in the United Kingdom and a further 147 in forty-five other countries throughout the world. There are also twenty Family Support Services in England, offering part-time help to elderly and handicapped people and to families with a handicapped member living in their own homes.

As the official British observer, Leonard Cheshire witnessed the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki in 1945. His book, *The Light of Many Suns*, published by Methuen in 1985, describes that experience and explains the effect that it has had upon his own attitude to nuclear deterrence.

Editorial Comment

The answers recorded here were given in an interview on 24th June 1986 in Maunsel Street, the London headquarters of the Cheshire Foundation. They represent the conclusions of someone who has been concerned with the problems of just defence in the nuclear age for over forty years. Two features may strike the reader in particular. The first is the idea, proposed in the answers to A2(A)(vii) and B(vii), that what is needed is not so much a reduction in certain classes of nuclear weapons, as a drastic and, if necessary, unilateral reduction in conventional forces. This is an approach which has not been given proper emphasis elsewhere in the book. It may be seen to carry through to its logical conclusion the conviction that the mutual possession of flexible and invulnerable second-strike nuclear forces in itself deters from war. The second is the fearless way in which Leonard Cheshire defends the use of nuclear weapons in 1945, and their deployment today, on moral grounds.

GROUP CAPTAIN LEONARD CHESHIRE

A Global Policy

1 The History of Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has OR Has it mainly been other factors? kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?

It has mainly been nuclear deterrence.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war? OR Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?

Mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike nuclear force does prevent war. I don’t agree with the right-hand side.
(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war?

I think that these limited nuclear options do enhance deterrence, because, if the only option that you had was a full strategic strike, this would be totally incredible. I don’t agree with what is suggested on the right, because the really vital threshold is the one between no war at all and nuclear war. I suppose that it is true that military planners in the East and in the West have at heart been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority – it’s only human to do that if you are a military planner. In fact, I think that this is unattainable, but nevertheless I do agree that there is a danger here. This way of thinking should be changed.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence?

I would like to see as minimal a deterrence as is effective and credible, and I think that there are types of nuclear weapons that we would be better without. In particular, I would like to do away with all battlefield nuclear weapons. There is a different logic to the battlefield nuclear weapon and to the strategic nuclear weapon. The battlefield nuclear weapon is aimed at striking the attacker’s army; the strategic nuclear weapon is aimed at destroying his country. So the latter deters in an absolute sense, but the former only in a relative sense. Moreover, since you also have the intermediate range between the two, which is partly battlefield because it is situated there, but also partly strategic because it is aimed at your homeland, there is a confusion of logic, which, I think, inhibits the arms control process.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it?

I think that the idea of nuclear balance is essential for stability. But I don’t know the extent to which the arms control negotiations have helped or hindered it. That requires specialized knowledge which I do not have.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking?

I am certainly afraid of the inevitable struggle on both sides to harness technology to their advantage, and of the vested interests that are aroused as a result. Military planners are cast in a mould that they cannot escape from. But
I do think that there is also a strong effort to control force-planning by strategic thinking.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) *Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future?*

I cannot believe that either side will think that it has got a first-strike capability. You would have to have a one hundred per cent certainty of eliminating all the enemy systems—you could not even afford a ninety per cent certainty. I just cannot believe it. And in any case, if this were threatened, you would know that the other side would resort to launch-on-warning. He would have to.

(ii) *Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure?*

I don’t think that inadvertent war is likely, because both sides have a common vested interest in preventing it. But I think that there is a great need to make certain that command, control and communication facilities are secure. I think that there is a danger here—but not a danger of a degree that is likely to lead to war.

(iii) *If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end hostilities swiftly?*

I simply do not know. I don’t think that anyone can know, because it has never happened. On the one hand, as I think Olof Palme put it, the dynamics of interaction might be so powerful that neither side could prevent escalation. On the other, the shock might be so great that hostilities would rapidly cease. I simply cannot believe that the superpowers would knowingly destroy one another. Above all, governments want to stay in power, and escalation would mean that they would not. It doesn’t make sense. So I think that there is a strong case for believing that, even if some accident were to happen, both sides would do everything that they could to stop it rather than to carry on.

(iv) *Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence?*

I don’t like new generations of battlefield systems, but I do see a need to update theatre systems—but only on the grounds that they are obsolete. I

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can't make a judgement on particular systems, such as Pershing II and Cruise, because I do not have the knowledge.

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? OR Is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in 1?

There are persuasive arguments on both sides here. I do not believe that it can offer a blanket defence. When you see what accidents there have been to what were supposed to be well-proved enterprises like the Challenger space shuttle and the Chernobyl reactor, you cannot believe that a complicated system such as SDI, which can never be tested, has a hope of being one hundred per cent reliable. It could be destabilizing, because it could cause the enemy to think that you were going for a first strike capability. On the other hand, I'm quite certain that the Russians are proceeding with one, too.

(vi) Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

As I have said, I see no alternative to our continuing to rely on nuclear deterrence at great power level. And I think that the danger of 'horizontal' proliferation can be met. In the first place, a Gadaffi would only have short-range delivery systems, so that whatever he did could only be local. But, above all, if something like that were to happen, then I am sure that Russia and America would combine swiftly to stop them. So I don't think that the danger is as great as the public thinks that it is.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is 'arms-control' an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

I do not think that we should lose faith in the multilateral arms control process. But I would propose something that is not usually recommended. First of all, in view of the terrible consequences that there would be were war of any kind to break out in Europe between the great powers, each side should say that war between the superpowers is a crime against humanity, whether conventional or nuclear. Either way, it's a crime against humanity. We totally renounce it. We declare before the world that we'll never even contemplate it. If that is so, then the present levels of armament in Europe, both nuclear and conventional, are excessive. They should be drastically reduced. But what form should these reductions take? It seems to me that, contrary to what most disarmers say, it is conventional forces that are least necessary and that pose the greatest risks. The most likely way for a nuclear war to break out is a conventional entanglement that begins to escalate. Most disarmers say that we should abolish nuclear deterrence and instead provide a secure conventional defence in Europe. But no-one has ever succeeded in doing this before. I just do not believe that you
can be so clever that you can thwart anything that the opposition may think up. So surely the correct thing to do is to do it the other way round: it is to dismantle, or virtually to dismantle, conventional defences in Europe — everything that could be aggressive at the conventional level — and merely aim to keep a policing force to maintain internal order (and conventional forces outside Europe for other security problems). And then, in the common interest of both sides, each should keep the insurance of a nuclear deterrent. Even Bruce Kent agrees that nuclear war between the superpowers is not a rational option — they will never deliberately fight each other with nuclear weapons. So in this way we would keep the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons, while getting rid of all the other incentives to war. We would have a safe world between superpowers.

The main argument that is invoked against this proposal is that it would not be credible. I will meet this objection in my answer to B(vii).

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely?

Well, global nuclear disarmament obviously would make war between the great powers a rational option again. It was always a rational option before, because you could think that you could achieve a limited objective and stop. Conventional weapons don’t threaten the destruction of your homeland. They only threaten the defeat of your armies. There is a total difference between conventional and nuclear weapons.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war?

Conventional war is, of course, preferable to nuclear war. But conventional war would in itself be so terrible that our goal must be the prevention of both.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out?

Yes, I do think that, if a conventional war broke out, nuclear weapons would be bound to be used sooner or later. Both sides would think that the other was getting a nuclear capability, there would be a frantic struggle on both sides to regain the capability, and there would be none of the balanced restraints that we have at the moment. So we would be in a worse position than we are in now.
(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility?

The left-hand side is correct.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely?

OR Is to argue that even multilateral nuclear disarmament is not desirable to give up all hope of a rational world-order?

There is a difference between the situation as it was in the years before 1914, and the situation today. Before 1914, war was a normal option of state policy. Now it can no longer be. So, although the situation today is more like the 1930’s, nuclear weapons have so altered things that no historical analogy really applies. We have hardly yet understood the extent to which things have been altered.

B NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe?

OR Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

I do think that the Soviet Union enjoys a dangerous military superiority in Europe. It’s not just a question of comparing numbers of divisions and so on. All sorts of other factors come into it, particularly geographical. The Soviet front line has the whole weight of the Soviet Union behind it, whereas we have to cope with 3000 miles of Atlantic. I don’t in fact believe that the Soviet Union wants to launch a frontal assault. But, if they were to do so with the determination with which they fought in World War 2, we couldn’t stop them. Western Europe could never withstand a Soviet conventional attack. We might hold it up for a month or so – but I doubt even that.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power which will take advantage of unilateral Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control agreements by Western determination and strength?

OR Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?

I rather think that both are partly true. Nobody can deny that Marxism-Leninism is an expansionist ideology. It has always preached world revolution. We are doing the leadership a discredit if we say that it no longer believes in that. So the régime is expansionist. But that does not mean that they want to use military force openly against the West to achieve that expansion, because they clearly recognize the dangers involved. And the Russian people, as distinct from the régime, have never been as imperialistic as, say, the Germans
or the British. Above all, historically, they have been terrified of invasion and obsessed by the fear of war being fought on their territory. That is why they acquired those buffer states at the end of World War 2. Nothing is ever black or white in these cases.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? Or is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

Well, I think that for deterrent reasons it is necessary for NATO to keep open the option of the early use of nuclear weapons - although, if it came to it, it could well be suicidal. That is why I have suggested that we should work towards conventional disarmament.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing? Or is the West initiate nearly all phases of the nuclear arms race and continue to enjoy a substantial lead in most areas? Is the nuclear ‘overkill’ such that the West could offer a nuclear ‘freeze’ or unconditional cuts without risk?

I do not think that we need to match the Soviet Union number for number, and no doubt some unilateral cuts could be made safely. But anything that threatens to impair the mutual second strike capability is destabilizing and dangerous. I fear that a freeze would do that, particularly as the Soviet Union has recently installed a new generation of missiles which the West has not matched.

(v) Are NATO ‘forward defence’ and ‘deep strike’ strategies essential for effective deterrence? Or should NATO exploit her lead in ‘emerging technology’ to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

As I have already indicated, I do not like these strategies. But I don’t think that ‘emerging technology’ helps at all. The remedy must lie in the direction of my main proposal: the dismantling of conventional forces in Europe.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported? Or is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

At the moment, if Western Europe were decoupled from the United States, she would have no defence at all - or practically no defence. Similarly, to make Europe a nuclear weapon-free zone would be to have given in. Since I do not believe that the superpowers are likely to become involved in a serious confrontation so long as nuclear deterrence is secure, I do not see that as a great danger. That is the situation as I see it today.

But, if there were a major reduction in the vast NATO conventional forces,
as suggested in my answer to A2(A)(vii), and the resources thus released were put into a second strike, flexible, nuclear capability, then I think that Western Europe would have the ability to inflict unacceptable damage on the Soviet Union, and this therefore would act as a credible deterrent. In those circumstances, Western Europe would no longer need to rely on the Americans.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

I agree with the right-hand side to the extent that Gorbachev and Reagan are both being insincere when they say that they want complete nuclear disarmament. It is an unattainable goal, and, for the foreseeable future, an undesirable one. I am also sure that there are some unilateral steps that we could take which would not be dangerous – although I don’t know whether they would have much effect. I'm not in the arms control business. But, on the whole, what is implied on the left-hand side is more realistic. I would be inclined to think that the Russian leadership understands force better than anything else. It's force that keeps the system going. From what I have seen in Poland, I’m inclined to think that force is the language that they understand. So, if we are tough but fair, we will probably get the best results.

Now I must meet the main criticism of my proposal that conventional forces should be virtually dismantled in Europe. It is said that, in view of Soviet inertia, if not belligerence, a significant reduction in Western conventional capabilities would undermine the credibility of nuclear deterrence. It is not credible that, if the Soviet Union occupied West Berlin tomorrow, America would respond with a nuclear strike. There are two things to be said. First, I am not suggesting a return to an ‘all-or-nothing’ policy of massive retaliation. I propose that we keep a graduated nuclear capability that does not include battlefield nuclear weapons, but does include intermediate nuclear weapons – preferably located under the sea, so that nobody can say ‘our bases are threatened’. Secondly, it will be up to us to make this graduated deterrent credible. We must define precisely what we mean by aggression, even if it takes us five years to work that definition out, and then we must say ‘if you put even one foot over the border, our response will be nuclear. It will not necessarily be total, but perhaps a warning shot across the bows. Enough to show you that we mean it. And you do the same on your side.’ The argument that such a threat would not be credible works both ways. Why would the Soviet Union risk its own destruction for the sake of West Berlin?

But in order to achieve all this, we have to recognize that nuclear weapons
have permanently altered the situation. We have to think in a new way. When I came back from Nagasaki in 1945, I wrote a report in which I said that nuclear weapons were from now onwards the decisive weapons in war, that rockets would replace bombers as the main delivery vehicles, and that this called for revolutionary thinking that in turn called for young minds. That was my conclusion then, and that is my conclusion now. At the moment we are still incapable of thinking in these new ways. Traditional habits of thought are too strong. But I'm sure that this is the direction we must move in. And I'm determined to fight for it.

C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?

OR Would all possible uses of Britain's 'deterrent' be suicidal? Is its only effect to encourage proliferation?

Obviously Britain can't 'go it alone' against the Soviet Union. That would make no sense at all. Britain is part of NATO. So I would be happy to see the British deterrent go, as long as it would be replaced by an American one.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making?

OR Is the 'second centre of decision making' an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

I think that there is a case for saying that an independent British deterrent enhances deterrence in general, and that the value of a second centre of decision-making of this kind is that it creates another area of uncertainty for the Soviet Union. But I do not think that this is a critical point. In the last resort it is only the American deterrent that deters. My fear would be that, if we got rid of the British deterrent, the next thing to go would be the American - and then we would be defenceless.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it?

OR Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

The linkage with the United States is essential, but I do not think that independent British nuclear forces are necessary for this. We could accept American nuclear forces in their place.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive?

OR Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?
I don't believe that conventional forces give us proper strategic protection. The cost of Britain's independent nuclear force may be small compared with the cost of suggested replacements, but there can be no effective conventional replacement for a nuclear deterrent.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

I don't know that our prestige matters much, and I'm not sure how much influence our possession of an independent nuclear force gives us with, say, the United States. I certainly don't mind France having a nuclear capability, and Britain not. The only thing that matters is the cohesion of NATO. So long as we and other Western European countries are committed to NATO and to its nuclear policies, then Europe is safe.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? OR Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

I don't know. I always refrain from making a judgement on a given weapon-system.

2 NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance? OR Should British obligations to NATO be met by strengthening conventional forces where necessary within an overall non-nuclear strategy as recommended in B?

I totally disagree with the idea that NATO should adopt a non-nuclear policy, for reasons which I will give later. I think that the more we involve ourselves in the overall NATO nuclear policy and its systems the better. It makes the deterrent more credible.

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible? OR Do the large numbers of nuclear facilities yielded to the US erode British sovereignty? Would their removal do no more than restore a normal peacetime relationship?

Apart from the qualification made in my answer to B(vi), I think that the US nuclear bases are essential. The suggestion that the United States might be tempted to fight a war on European soil while herself remaining unharmed is nonsensical. A war on this scale would be bound to affect everyone. Nor do I think that we have yielded our sovereignty by having these bases.
(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally? OR Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any superpower confrontation unless bases are removed?

I don’t like the argument on the right. It says, if there’s going to be a war, let someone else be hit and not us. In any case, if the disarmers are arguing that we should compensate by increasing our conventional forces, then this seems hardly likely to make us less of a target.

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US ‘umbrella’ than any other Western ally – or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

If it were true a non-nuclear defence could be effective against a nuclear aggressor, those on the right-hand side would be right. But it is not true. I simply cannot understand the premise of people like Bruce Kent. You may be able to upgrade your conventional defence to the point where you can hold an aggressor on the battlefield, perhaps even though he is using battlefield nuclear weapons. But the moment he invokes strategic missiles targeted on your cities, it no longer matters what is going on on the battlefield – you go under. I cannot understand how a rational person can think that conventional defences could ever be effective against the threat of a strategic nuclear attack.

Moral Considerations

(i) Is it morally right to pursue the policy least likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong? OR Are there actions which are in themselves wrong no matter what the situation? Is the alternative to excuse almost any act of barbarism?

(ii) In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies? OR Is the only relevant point here that a nuclear exchange of almost any kind would in itself cause unimaginable suffering to largely civilian populations?

Although it may be true in the absolute that certain actions are wrong, when you come to apply them to the concrete reality of war, you may have to try to choose the lesser of two evils. Take World War 2, which is the only war I know. In that war roughly two civilians died for every military – thirty-five million civilians and twenty million military – something like that. Now, isn’t that totally wrong? So the moral objections that nuclear disarmers raise against nuclear war, I also raise against conventional war between major powers in a modern context. My argument is that we have passed that threshold of history
beyond which war between major powers is no longer morally permissible. The question which should concern moralists here is – how can we prevent this happening again?

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use? Is there no such thing as a fully deployed weapons system which is a bluff? Is to deploy nuclear weapons to intend to use them in certain circumstances?

Now we come to the question of intention. And the second stage of the argument is this: assuming that it is nuclear deterrence that prevents all forms of war between major powers, and this is your sole intention in deploying nuclear weapons, how can it be morally wrong to do so? First of all, I don’t believe that the intention of those who deploy the deterrent is to use it. Both the Russians and the Americans who deploy it are convinced that, by deploying it, they can make its use impossible. And, secondly, how can it be right to permit the horror of conventional war by removing nuclear deterrence, simply because of the supposed immorality of the intentions of those who are deploying the deterrent? This seems to me to be an extraordinary position. It is this argument from conditional intention that carries most Christian moralists, but they just haven’t thought it out.

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence? Is a conditional intention to cause indiscriminate and disproportionate suffering of this kind, whether admonitory, preemptive or retaliatory, ruled out by Just War theory? Was it wrong to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945?

I hold that it was not wrong to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And the reason why I say that is that the only foreseeable alternative was the all-out invasion of Japan. Given the Japanese military mind at the time, that would have involved a fight to the last man, total war across the whole of Japan, in which, not hundreds of thousands, but millions would have died. Now, what do those who disapprove of the dropping of the bombs say when I challenge them with this? Pax Christi tell me that a full-scale invasion would have been wrong, too. They say that we should have used a blockade. But a blockade inevitably causes terrible suffering, particularly to the innocent. As the blockade tightens, the armed forces have to keep the food and medical supplies for those who can fight. In Leningrad 800,000 civilians died through blockade, and they died worse deaths than those in Hiroshima and Nagasaki – lingering deaths, frozen, without food, without medical supplies. It’s unimaginable. According to these moralists, if we had imposed such a blockade against Japan, we would not have been to blame for the fact that civilians were hit worst, because we would not have made that choice. But this is Pharisaical. It is part of a rather hypocritical search for our own purity by pretending to shift the

1. International Catholic Movement for Peace.
blame to the defenders. When I put that to Bruce Kent, he said that a blockade
would also have been wrong. In other words, there was nothing that we could
have done to the Japanese. We would have had to have given in.

And the same thing applies to those who say that we are not allowed even
the conditional intention to use nuclear weapons which they say is implied in
deterrence. If the only alternative to nuclear deterrence is that there will be a
greater likelihood of conventional war, then it is hypocritical of those who
want to abandon nuclear deterrence to say that they would not share moral
responsibility for that war. To say this is again to be more concerned with
your own moral purity than with the effect of your policy.

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear
weapons and world poverty and disease? OR Is it a scandal that such huge resources are
devoted to the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and not to the
alleviation of suffering?

Although there is obviously a certain truth in the argument on the right, it is
in general dishonest. We spend as much money on alcohol as we do on defence
— why not say ‘cut back on your alcohol’? And I’m sure that any money saved
would not go to the poor. It would go on better roads, or lower taxes, or the
Trade Unions would ask for higher wages. What is lacking is the will to help
the poor.

(vi) Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons? OR Does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?

I would say that Christian teaching regrets that there is a need for nuclear
deterrence, but, in the circumstances, allows it. When it was a question of the
Just War theory, the Church longed to abolish war. But it could not do so,
and therefore had to make the best of the sinful situation that we are in. Bruce
Kent says that the Roman Catholic Church does not allow the continuing
deployment of nuclear weapons. But it does. None of the bishops’ conferences
have forbidden the deployment of nuclear weapons. The American bishops,
who have actually written the most profound document of all on the morality
of war, have got into a muddle over it. They seem to condemn all use of nuclear
weapons, but then leave an ambiguity as to whether they mean all use or not. If they do mean that all use is inadmissible, then they should have
forbidden deployment, too. They try to say ‘you may deploy them, so long as
you state that they will never be used’. But in that case, how do they deter? The
answer that is given is that they will still deter, because the enemy won’t know
that you mean it. Well, that is a deliberate deception. You are living a lie. And
how they can justify that morally I don’t know. That is not Christian. It isn’t
straight dealing. How is he going to believe anything else you say?

Recommendations

1. No (See B(iv)).
2. Not on research programmes (See A2(A)(v)).
3. I don't know.
4. I question its usefulness, because I doubt whether it's really going to be believed by the other side. It sounds good, but I don't think it's significant (See B(iii)).
5. Yes. And in some cases unconditional (See A1(iv)).
6. I don't think that a European nuclear weapon-free zone would enhance security. I think it would do exactly the opposite. Anyway, you cannot guarantee that weapons won't drop on Europe just because you have declared it nuclear free (See B(vi)).
7. I don't know.
8. No (See A2(B)).
9. The idea of a 'minimum' or 'sufficient' nuclear deterrent is a good one. But not as a stage on the way to swift nuclear disarmament as CND wants. It should be a permanent arrangement. CND have shifted their ground here.
10. I don't see why we shouldn't, as long as it's research. I like any advance in technology. It might be put to civilian use.
12. (a) Yes.
   (b) No – keep them, especially if they are sea-based. Although then they are not so accurate. That's the snag.
13. On balance, I would like to keep them. But, as long as there are American replacements, I don't make too much of this.
14. No, she certainly should not. But see the qualification in B(vi).
16. No, but this is not crucial (See CI).
17. I am very much against this. I think that it's dangerous (See A2(A)(vii) & B(vii)).
18. No (See C2(i)).
19. No (See C2(i) & C2(ii)).
20. Does not apply.
Biographical Note

Born in 1938, Denzil Davies was Bacon scholar at Gray's Inn, and then a teaching fellow at the University of Chicago, before becoming Labour Member of Parliament for Llanelli in 1970. He was Minister of State at Her Majesty's Treasury between 1975 and 1979. Since then he has been Opposition Spokesman on Foreign Affairs, 1979-1981, Opposition Spokesman on Defence, 1981-1983, and, from 1983, Chief Opposition Spokesman on Defence and Disarmament.
Editorial Comment

These answers were communicated in an interview in the House of Commons on December 4, 1986. Their political importance for the reader is that they offer the full rationale behind current Labour Party policy. As Denzil Davies points out at the beginning of Section C on British Policy, what the Labour Party proposes for Britain can only be understood against the background of earlier answers. Because nuclear weapons are rationally unusable (A2(B)(ii), B(iii)), they do not deter (A1(ii)), but, on the contrary, are likely to convert political crisis into catastrophe (A1(iii), A2 (B)(v)). Continued Western dependence upon them means that proper non-nuclear defences are neglected. This is unnecessary (B(i) and B(ii)). Britain's renunciation of her own nuclear weapons will enable her to maintain effective defences which will otherwise be seriously weakened (C1(iv)). The proposed move towards non-nuclear defence within NATO (C2(i), C2(ii)) must be seen against the background of the answers to questions B(iii), B(iv), B(v), and B(vi), which justify it. Finally, it is the important answers to questions A2(A)(vii) and B(vii) which support the argument in C2(iv), and provide the overall context within which the proposed British policy is set.

THE RT HON DENZIL DAVIES MP

A Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?

OR Has it mainly been other factors?

Without going into details, I think that, whatever the situation just after the Second World War when the Americans had a nuclear monopoly, in recent years it has mainly been other factors.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?

OR Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?

As I say, it may have been the case when only one side had an invulnerable and effective nuclear force that this prevented war, but it certainly cannot be the case when both have. For example, the main reason why President Reagan says that he is proposing his Strategic Defence Initiative is because he cannot see how he can defend America with 11,000 warheads, when the Russians have got 11,000 warheads pointing at America. And that, in particular, is why 'extended deterrence' cannot work. There is no American 'nuclear umbrella'
over Europe – as people like Henry Kissinger are right to point out to us. There can’t be. No American president will authorize the use of American strategic nuclear forces in the defence of Europe, when the inevitable result would be the destruction of America.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has ‘flexible response’ dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

The suggestion on the left-hand side is entirely wrong. In fact, the opposite is the case. It is a mistake to think that the danger is of some kind of Blitzkrieg war, in which one side deliberately decides to launch an all-out attack on the other. Much the greater danger is that a period of heightened political tension will spill over into war, and then the fact that we have scattered battlefield and theatre nuclear weapons throughout Europe will make it much more likely that this will quickly degenerate into nuclear war.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

In general I don’t think that piling strategic weapons on strategic weapons makes much difference. I wouldn’t have thought that the danger was greater with 11,000 warheads than it is with 5000. I’ll concede this argument to the Richard Perles of this world. The main dangers lie in the types of weapon deployed, and in the effect which larger numbers – particularly of battlefield and theatre nuclear weapons – have in making command and control more difficult.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

The idea of balance seems reassuring, but in a situation of mutual suspicion and partial ignorance of what the other side has got, it breaks down. There is no agreement about what you count, or how you count it, or what the overall situation is. So, when one side reaches a point where it thinks that there is a balance, the other gets worried and thinks that it is behind. That is what has been happening repeatedly since 1962. It has gone in spurts. At the time of the Cuba missile crisis, the Russians had 300 missiles, and the Americans had 5000. So the Russians then did a great spurt, and the Americans thought that they had been overtaken. Then the Americans did a spurt to try to catch up again. And so it goes on.

Arms control has had a very limited success. It has not stopped new technology, but has perhaps done something to limit the application of some of the technology already developed. One trouble is that particular systems are justified as 'bargaining chips' on the grounds that this will force the other side to negotiate. But then, when it comes to it, they are not given up, and only stimulate further expansion on the other side. So there are more and more 'bargaining chips' and no bargains. But arms control negotiations do serve as a forum for discussion, so, to that extent, we should not be against them.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

I agree very strongly with what is written on the right-hand side. Those who have done step-by-step analyses of the life-history of particular nuclear weapons systems, find that the starting point is an equation somewhere. Then, when the technological possibility of a new weapon has been established, people start to devise reasons for having it. Most of the arguing in post hoc rationalization.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

First strike is in the eye of the beholder. For example, although the Americans say that Star Wars is to be a purely defensive system, the Russians are convinced that it is part of an evolving first strike strategy. There is considerable mutual fear that new systems of all kinds will give the other such an advantage. Once again, we are not talking so much of a sudden deliberate surprise attack, as of what is likely to happen in a time of acute political crisis.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? OR Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

Of course we should be alarmed about the threat to command and control systems. In the kind of situation which we have been describing, they are likely to become increasingly vulnerable and therefore increasingly unreliable.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end limited once it had broken out a dangerous hostilities swiftly? OR Is the idea that nuclear war could be limited once it had broken out a dangerous illusion?

Frankly, I don't think that I can answer this question. I certainly don't subscribe to the idea that it makes any sense at all to plan in terms of 'limited
nuclear war' – whatever that’s supposed to mean. I don’t subscribe to NATO or Warsaw Pact nuclear war-fighting strategies. But whether, if there were an initial exchange, it would escalate to all-out nuclear war, or lead both sides to terminate hostilities quickly, I just don’t know.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence? OR Do new battlefield and theatre weapons threaten a dangerous lowering of the nuclear threshold?

I have answered this. I think that new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear weapons, deployed as part of NATO and Warsaw Pact war-fighting strategies, are indeed highly dangerous.

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? OR Is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in (iv)?

As nearly all commentators agree, Star Wars is very unlikely to give us a totally effective defence against ballistic nuclear weapons. And it is also flawed in the sense that the technology developed as part of it would provide us with ingenious and dangerous offensive systems as well. The distinction between offence and defence here is illusory. In the meantime, it clearly is destabilizing, both because the Russians inevitably see it as part of a threatened first strike capability, and because it jeopardizes past arms control agreements, such as the ABM treaty, and blocks future ones, as we saw at Reykjavik.

But we must not ignore the thinking behind it. President Reagan no longer believes in the nuclear umbrella, which is why he is trying to substitute another one for it. His speech of September 23, 1983, challenges the whole strategic assumption of the past forty years – the M.A.D. world, if you like. He is quite rightly groping towards an alternative.

(vi) Is the threat of ‘horizontal’ nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

I don’t know whether the fact that the great powers have got nuclear weapons makes it more likely that other countries will want to have them, or whether, if the great powers were to give them up, other countries would then not want to have them. I don’t know. But I suspect that each country which has the technology will decide independently in terms of its own interests. But those who say that nuclear weapons have kept the peace for forty years in Europe, certainly should not argue against exporting them, say, to the Middle East. Both the Iraqis and the Iranians should be given them. That is the logic of it. They can’t have it both ways.
(vii) **Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability?** OR **Is 'arms-control' an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy - nuclear disarmament?**

As we look ahead, what is important from a global perspective is what happened at Reykjavik. I don’t think that things will be the same again. In the past, arms control has done little more than regulate the nuclear arms race, because the assumption behind it has been that the two superpowers would continue to rely on nuclear deterrence indefinitely. But this has now changed. There has been a challenge to the system. And the challenge has come from the leaders of the two greatest powers. I think that we must recognize that both Mr Gorbachev and Mr Reagan are genuine in their desire to rid the world of nuclear weapons. Both understand that we cannot go on as we have in the past. They feel that, without nuclear weapons, the East and the West can live together and avoid war. Reagan is genuine, if misguided, about Star Wars. And Gorbachev is genuine in proposing that we eliminate nuclear weapons by the end of the century. I don’t think that he is saying this just to divide Western Europe from America, or just because he cannot afford to take up the Star Wars challenge – counter-measures are likely to be far cheaper than Star Wars itself. No. Reykjavik has established the global context within which all of us, including Britain, should now be moving. It is depressing to see the way in which it is Western Europe which is dragging its feet. Mrs Thatcher is horrified at the prospect of Reykjavik, because it takes away the justification for her nuclear defence policies.

(B) **WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

(i) **If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely?** OR **Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?**

Well, once again it is a question of what you believe. Those who think that there is no such thing as conventional deterrence, and that there is only such a thing as nuclear deterrence, will never be convinced. If you believe that it is only nuclear deterrence that prevents war, then you will be terrified of losing it. But, as I have said, I do not believe this. On the contrary, I believe that much greater dangers lie in continuing to base defence on irrational and unstable nuclear strategies.

(ii) **Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war?** OR **Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?**

Yes. The implication on the left-hand side is familiar. 'If you are proposing to get rid of nuclear forces and to increase conventional forces, what’s the difference?' The difference, I think, is pretty basic. Its a difference in the very nature of the conflict. We don’t need to go as far as imagining a major
exchange, and the possibility of a 'nuclear winter', to realize this. In a conventional war, with modern weaponry, large numbers of civilians would undoubtedly be killed on both sides, and moral questions, comparable to those associated with the bombing of Dresden in the last war, would be raised. A conventional war would, of course, be terrible. But a nuclear exchange would, in addition, involve radiation and fallout. The accident at Chernobyl has brought home to us how people living hundreds of miles away from the battle zone would be affected. Countries which had nothing to do with the war would suffer. Crops would be blighted, livestock would die, and the contamination might last for generations. There is a clear difference in quality between the two.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out? OR As with nerve gases in the last war, would there be no incentive to resort to capabilities which the other side has as well?

This phrase sounds good, but means nothing. 'Nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented'. Of course we cannot abolish science. Nothing that we do can affect the fact that $e = mc^2$. But we are talking about turning the equations into technology, and that is something that we can and must control. We can make it much more difficult to do this, and we can build political systems which remove most of the incentive to do so.

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility? OR Is to argue that even multilateral nuclear disarmament is not desirable to give up all hope of a rational world-order?

We are really talking about bilateral nuclear disarmament, aren't we? In the past, people like Mrs Thatcher have said that they are in favour of 'multilateral nuclear disarmament'. But now they have been flushed out. The moment the two world leaders seem to be on the verge of achieving this, Mrs Thatcher has come out into the open and admit that she is not in favour of bilateral or multilateral nuclear disarmament after all. She wants perpetual nuclear deterrence. To argue as she does is, indeed, to give up all hope of a rational world order.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely? OR Do the years before 1914 show what happens when military planning and the arms race control political choices? Do present strategies make nuclear war almost inevitable under likely future conditions? Is global nuclear disarmament the only rational policy?

The trouble is that people are always trying to fight the last war. They cling onto what they are used to. In this case, the people who believe in perpetual nuclear deterrence are saying 'We must do what we did not do in the 1930s. We must stop the Russians from starting a Third World War by going on building up
more and more nuclear weapons.' In fact, Britain and France had very powerful military forces in the 1930s, and, in any case, Soviet Russia today cannot usefully be compared to NAZI Germany then. But, if we are going to make historical comparisons, a closer parallel would be with the years before 1914—the two armed alliances, the building up of more and more powerful arsenals, the elaboration of war-fighting strategies, the prospect of a confrontation being triggered by some incident in central Europe, or even further afield. And today, as we have seen, the nature and disposition of new generations of nuclear weapons makes it more and more likely that, in those circumstances, the situation would rapidly escalate to nuclear war.

b NATO policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? or Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

This is a crucial area. People are still being fed the idea that the Warsaw Pact enjoys a four to one advantage in conventional forces over NATO. In introducing a programme on defence on television recently, David Dimbleby repeated it. It was an extraordinary statement to make, and he should have done his research properly. It is true that the Russians have more tanks, and the Warsaw Pact can be said to have local superiority along certain sectors of the Central Front. But, if you look at the totality of forces, which is what matters, then both sides are probably evenly matched. It is not just a question of numbers either, but of an overall capacity to wage war. This includes industrial and technological capabilities, the reliability of your Allies, and so on. And an attacker needs decisive superiority if he is to be confident of success in a frontal assault. When everything is weighed up together, it is probably true to say that the two sides are relatively evenly matched. Continued talk of a four to one Warsaw Pact advantage must be shown up for what it is—a gross, and often deliberate, distortion of the facts.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power or Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente? which will take advantage of unilateral Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control agreements by Western determination and strength?

I think that, as they stand, both of the alternatives here are rather exaggerated. I do not believe that the Soviet Union is an expansionist power, which wants to drive West or South. But the Russians are equally paranoid about the West. We have no intention of attacking them, either. So mutual paranoia feeds on itself. The danger is that wars don't just start because one side deliberately decides to attack the other, but often as a result of mutual suspicion, fear, and misunderstanding. This is what must be dispelled. And it can only be done...
by restraint on both sides, and a readiness to believe that the other's offers are genuinely made with a view to reducing tension and building confidence.

A number of Mr Gorbachev's recent proposals should be welcomed in this spirit. We should recognize that significant changes have been taking place in Russia. We often forget that Russia has been through a terrible dark age. There was the appalling suffering of the First World War, the upheaval of the Revolution, the ruthlessness with which Stalin drove through industrialization in the 1930s, the trauma of the Second World War, the post-war period of Stalinist purges, the débacle of Cuba when Khruschev overreached himself and the military realized how far behind they were in the arms race, the consequent build-up of arms under Brezhnev as the Russians tried to catch up. And now they are coming out of it. Gorbachev represents a new generation, no longer conditioned by the revolutionary and immediate post-revolutionary experience. We have a real opportunity to put the past behind us and to move slowly out of the Cold War era. The West should respond with flexibility and not react with suspicion to everything that Mr Gorbachev proposes. Funnily enough, a number of people within the Reagan administration, such as George Schultz, realize this in a way that people in our government in Britain do not. Mrs Thatcher, for example, refuses to let go of her habitual hostility, because she has a vested interest in the perpetuation of the enemy threat.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? or Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

We have already seen why NATO's dependence on nuclear weapons is militarily unnecessary. It is also strategically suicidal. We can't use our nuclear weapons without causing far more damage to our own side, and risking indiscriminate, if not universal, catastrophe. So what is the point of having them? As it is, all that they do is to make it more and more likely that a future political crisis will precipitate nuclear war. I am not a military historian or a military expert, but increasing numbers of those who are now recognize this. Like all other areas of policy, military strategy must evolve and change with circumstances. It is quite possible that the strategy was all right twenty years ago. It may or may not have been. But there is no doubt that today it is unnecessary, irrational and dangerous. Just as in the years leading up to 1940 the French generals showed themselves to be incapable of recognizing that circumstances had changed, so there is a great danger that we are in the process of doing the same now. We keep thinking that the danger that we face is of a Second World War Blitzkrieg, and fail to realize that an unpremeditated collapse into war, triggered by political crisis, and precipitated by nuclear war-fighting strategies, is a far more serious threat. The policy must be changed.

One of the troubles here has been the traditional refusal of the Federal Republic of Germany even to contemplate the possibility of a war being fought
on her territory. As a result, she has tried to convince herself that with nuclear weapons this will not happen. So, paradoxically, she continues to support a strategy which is far more likely in the event to destroy her. It is a major objective of British Labour Party policy to persuade NATO allies to shift towards a proper non-nuclear defence strategy.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing?

The important point to be made here is that, even within the terms of nuclear deterrence theories, there is ample room for both NATO and the Warsaw Pact to begin to shift towards non-nuclear defence, without having at every stage to become enmeshed in intricate multilateral bargaining. This is not to advocate 'unilateral nuclear disarmament'. It is to decide the overall strategy that is in our own best interest, and then to move towards it in whatever way seems prudent and safe at the time.

A further point to be made here is that even Americans like Richard Perle, who want to keep a nuclear deterrent, agree that with modern technology there is no need to persist with land-based nuclear systems in Europe. Once again, it has been Western European governments which have foolishly insisted on this, largely for political reasons. Militarily these weapons are a liability, serving only to ensure enemy targeting. NATO is already cutting down her battlefield nuclear arsenal in Europe. She can also safely begin to remove her land-based theatre systems too.

(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrent or Should NATO exploit her lead in 'emerging technology' to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

It is important to understand that NATO's dependence on nuclear weapons is part and parcel of her continuing commitment to forward defence. It is largely because West Germany does not want to accept the logic of in-depth defences, and insists on the holding of the frontier at all costs, that NATO has had to fall back on the nuclear deterrent threat. For the same reason, 'deep strike', the engagement of the enemy follow-on forces, instead of being mainly concerned with their destruction once they have crossed the frontier, has to involve apparent plans for offensives deep into enemy territory. So a second major objective of Labour Party policy will be to persuade NATO Allies to accept military reality, and supplement the present inflexible response with a proper flexible mix of defence options. There are large numbers of possibilities, which are being widely studied by military planners at the moment. We don't need to commit ourselves to the fate of the Spartans at Thermopylae.
(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported?

OR Is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

These alternatives are too extreme. The main reason why American troops are in Europe is to defend the interests of the United States. This is just as it should be. It is in the American interest that Western Europe should not be dominated by the rival superpower. But that does not mean that Western Europeans have supinely to support every American policy. We should certainly try to develop greater European awareness, so that there can be a more equal discussion of priorities within the Alliance. The Americans have always said that they would welcome this. Indeed, I feel rather sorry for them. First of all, Chancellor Schmidt says that he desperately wants American Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe, because he no longer believes in the strategic umbrella. Then, when they are installed, the Americans are blamed for putting them there. Then the Americans negotiate with the Russians to get rid of them, and General Rogers and Mrs Thatcher rush off to Washington to persuade them not to. Western European governments should be supporting any moves which seem likely to lead to the negotiated removal of these weapons. As can be seen, it is quite wrong to call this an ‘anti-American’ policy.

But it doesn’t mean anything to say that Europe should be ‘decoupled’ from the superpower confrontation. Apart from anything else, Russia is in Europe.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

OR Are unilateral initiatives as part of a general programme of nuclear disarmament the only way to reverse the arms race? Is talk of ‘multilateral disarmament’ insincere in the mouths of those who reject all suggestion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a Nuclear Freeze, a European Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, or a declaration of No First Use?

I repeat. The Labour Party does not advocate unilateral nuclear disarmament. That is something that opponents like to accuse us of, because then they can simply say that we would be exposing the West to Soviet nuclear blackmail, and do not have to argue out the implications of their own policies any further. But nuclear blackmail does not come into it. What we are working towards is a proper strengthening of NATO defences, so that we no longer have to rely on the increasingly dangerous illusion of extended nuclear deterrence. This would, of course, be part of a broader negotiated settlement within the terms already roughly laid out by the President of the United States and the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. It is essential that we set this up straight away as a long-term policy objective, and move towards it as far and as fast as we safely can. Some of this can be done independently; some will
require bilateral or multilateral agreement. At no point is there any question of laying ourselves open to Soviet nuclear blackmail. I have already explained why land-based battlefield and theatre nuclear systems can be built down with less risk than was involved in building them up in the first place. And it is hypocritical of those who oppose Mr Reagan's declared desire to rid the world of nuclear weapons, and argue against an acceptance of Mr Gorbachev's offer to negotiate nuclear weapons away by the year 2000, at the same time to say that we cannot move towards the elimination of nuclear weapons from Europe because we would then be laying ourselves open to Soviet nuclear blackmail. The elimination of defence policies based on irresponsible nuclear war-fighting strategies is recognized to be an urgent mutual priority for both East and West. There is only one rational middle-term function for nuclear weapons, and that is as minimum forces to be held by both superpowers during the period of adjustment, in order to allay fears on both sides that the other might be tempted to cheat.

By saying that the British Labour Party is irresponsible because it is advocating unilateral nuclear disarmament, opponents like to imply that they are responsibly advocating multilateral nuclear disarmament. This is not the case. As their reaction to Reykjavik has shown, they are not nuclear disarmer at all, but advocates of indefinite reliance on nuclear deterrence and on defence based on nuclear war-fighting strategies. The British Labour Party advocates independent, bilateral, and multilateral moves towards long-term political stability and non-nuclear defence. It is those Western European governments which continue to cling to outmoded and increasingly dangerous nuclear deterrent policies, and are prepared, as a result, to jeopardize joint progress by the superpowers towards a non-nuclear world, which are guilty of shortsightedness and irresponsibility.

C British Policy

British policy must be seen against the background that we have just outlined. A lot of the misunderstanding of Labour Party policy comes from failing to do this.

If you like, we could say that there are, roughly, three interrelated areas of British interest and influence. First, there are those things that are within the sovereign competence of a British government to do, in what are thought to be the best interests of Britain. These are the independent actions which the Labour Party is proposing. But this can only be understood within the context of Britain's membership of the NATO Alliance. This is the second of the circles of influence. Here Britain is not sovereign. We have influence and can work towards a strategy which we think is in the best interest of the Alliance as a whole. But we may not be able to persuade all our Allies. Finally, there is the global circle, where our influence on, say, arms control negotiations between America and Russia is pretty limited. But at least we need not be
obstructive. At least the policies that we propose can be seen to contribute to what is in the best long-term interest of us all. At least we can push forward the debate that was begun at Reykjavik. It is depressing that, whereas in America the debate is being carried on energetically, not only by Democrats like Senator Nunn, but also by members of the administration, like George Schultz, Richard Perle, and the President himself, in this country there is almost no debate at all.

1 The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail? OR Would all possible uses of Britain's 'deterrent' be suicidal? Is its only effect to encourage proliferation?

Britain's so-called 'independent deterrent' is not a 'weapon of last resort', because it cannot be used. And the idea that it can protect us against nuclear blackmail is fanciful. An imagined scenario in which we successfully stand out alone against the Soviet Union, is, to put it mildly, unconvincing. And to say that the supposed enemy is some other, as yet non-nuclear, power, is to argue for the indiscriminate spread of nuclear weapons.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making? OR Is the 'second centre of decision making' an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

What the argument on the left-hand side is really saying here is that we no longer believe in the American umbrella. We no longer believe in extended deterrence. And the proposed remedy simply compounds this. Are we to believe that, if the Americans with their 11,000 warheads will be reluctant to use them for fear of retaliation, Britain, with 200, will not? The same is true of a 'European nuclear force'. Apart from being a political impossibility, it would also heighten tension and increase instability – Anglo-French cooperation would have to be extended to include the West Germans.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? OR Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

There is no overall 'American view' by the nature of the way in which American government works. But most Americans probably see the British deterrent as a bit of a nuisance, which just complicates arms talks. On the other hand, if we want to go on indulging this delusion of grandeur, they are prepared to let us do so. It makes no material difference to our relationship with America whether we do or do not.
(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? OR Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

First of all, it does not play a 'vital defence role'. But the important point here is that the money for, say, Trident, comes out of money that would otherwise go into non-nuclear defence. Future constraints on the defence budget mean that conventional forces will undoubtedly suffer if we carry through the proposed 'modernization' of our nuclear forces.

Nor is it true that the economy benefits more from investment in nuclear than in non-nuclear programmes. With Trident, for example, we may employ a few whizz-kids with PhDs in physics at Aldermaston building warheads, but the really difficult bit - the missiles - is made by the Americans. Technologically and industrially, investment in conventional forces would benefit us more.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

Our so-called independent deterrent gives us virtually no influence at all, even with the Americans. America is a super-power and will act according to its own interests.

As for the French nuclear forces, they are just as much of an illusion as ours. And, when you talk to them about it, you find that they are just as much at sixes and sevens as we are. What are they going to do with them? Bomb Russia? Bomb Germany?

On the other hand, I do not subscribe to the idea that Britain's giving up of her nuclear weapons would influence the Soviet Union, or other as yet semi-nuclear or non-nuclear powers. You can't negotiate effectively with a superpower when you are not in that league. And why should other powers be particularly interested in what Britain does? It's a hang-over from empire to think that they will be. As I have said earlier, the reason for Britain to give up nuclear weapons is because it is in her own strategic interest to do so.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? OR Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

I have already answered this.

2 Nato Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance? OR Should British obligations to NATO be met by strengthening conventional forces where necessary within an overall non-nuclear strategy as recommended in B?
This is where we begin to enter the second circle of influence, which I was mentioning earlier. The fundamental point here is that, for reasons already explained, our security does not depend on NATO's nuclear policies. Neither the West Germans, nor the 55,000 British troops in Germany, are going to be too happy if nuclear bombs are dropped on their heads by F-111s. These weapons have no credible military use. That is why the Labour Party will work towards non-nuclear defence for NATO, and will substantially increase Britain's conventional contribution.

But the question being asked here is, given the fact that we do not control overall NATO strategy, can a non-nuclear Britain continue to be a member of an Alliance which, wrongly in our opinion, still commits itself to a nuclear war-fighting strategy? And the answer is, of course, yes. There are a number of countries already in NATO which are non-nuclear, such as Denmark. And it is an insult to them to say that, if we go non-nuclear, we will be 'reduced' to their status. As for the argument that in that case we will be shifting the burden to, say, West Germany, well, it will be up to the West Germans to decide whether they do or do not want to go on with suicidal and dangerous nuclear deterrent policies. We will be trying to persuade them that they do not.

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?  

OR Do the large numbers of nuclear facilities yielded to the US erode British sovereignty? Would their removal do no more than restore a normal peacetime relationship?

And the same applies to American bases. The withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from Britain will not affect defence very much at all. They are not integral to defence in the first place - even within terms of American strategic nuclear deterrence. America will keep her bases and all her other facilities. None of her ships will be barred from visiting our ports, even if they are nuclear capable. As I have said, American troops are in Europe, quite rightly, for the main purpose of defending American interests. It is also in our interest that they should remain here. So neither they nor we will jeopardize our mutual interest by making more of this than is in fact the case.

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally?  

OR Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any superpower confrontation unless bases are removed?

This is not for me a decisive issue. It is probably true that we are more of a target with the missiles here, because there is more of a temptation to take them off. But it is silly to suppose that an island twenty miles from the mainland will not be involved if a war started on the continent.
iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella?

OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US 'umbrella' than any other Western ally – or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

Now we reach the third circle of influence. It is out of our power to dictate whether Russia or America go on with their nuclear deterrent policies. We hope that they will be moving away from them. If they do not, there is nothing that we will be able to do about it. But this cannot be called 'sheltering under the American nuclear umbrella', because, as we have seen, there is no such thing. There may have been an umbrella when the Americans had a nuclear monopoly, but there certainly isn't now. Helmut Schmidt does not believe in it. Henry Kissinger does not believe in it. And President Reagan does not believe in it.

Moral Considerations

(i) Is it morally right to pursue the policy least likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong?

OR Are there actions which are in themselves wrong no matter what the situation? Is the alternative to excuse almost any act of barbarism?

(ii) In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies?

OR Is the only relevant point here that a nuclear exchange of almost any kind would in itself cause unimaginable suffering to largely civilian populations?

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use?

OR Is there no such thing as a fully deployed weapons system which is a bluff? Is to deploy nuclear weapons to intend to use them in certain circumstances?

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence?

OR Is a conditional intention to cause indiscriminate and disproportionate suffering of this kind, whether admonitory, preemptive or retaliatory, ruled out by Just War theory? Was it wrong to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945?

All weapons can be used immorally, and a lot has been written in an attempt to define this. But, as I have said, nuclear weapons are different, because I just do not think that there can be a moral use of them. I believe that the American catholic bishops came to the same conclusion.¹ And, if the use is immoral, then the threat to use them is immoral. It is immoral to deploy them.

The Rt. Hon. Denzil Davies P.C., M.P.

(v) **Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and world poverty and disease?**

I think that, in general, it is morally wrong that we are spending so much on armaments, and so little on constructive economic and social programmes. But I do not think that this is peculiar to nuclear weapons. I can't see that there is a special link here which does not apply to other weapons as well.

(vi) **Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons?**

I have said that it is immoral to deploy nuclear weapons. So I suppose that, if Christian teaching coincides with morality here, it, too, must condemn their deployment. And the same might apply to other religions. I just don't know.

**Recommendations**

1 Yes.
2 Yes (See A2(A)(v)).
3 Yes.
4 Yes (See B(iii)).
5 Yes (See A2(A)(vii)).
6 I don't think that this would mean much.
7 Yes.
8 If it were possible, yes. But it seems too optimistic.
9 Let us say that both sides had negotiated 90 per cent reductions, then I would not object to their saying that they wanted to keep 10 per cent in order to see how it went.
10 Yes.
11 Yes (See B(iii)).
12 Yes (See B(iv) & B(vii)).
13 Yes (See C1(v)).
14 This would be part of 12, part of a NATO agreement (See B(iv) & B(vii)).
15 See 6.
16 Yes (See C1).
17 Yes (See C1(iv)).
18 Yes (See C2(i)).
19 Yes (See C2(i) & (C2(ii)).
20 Britain will not leave NATO, even if she fails to persuade her Allies to adopt her preferred policies. She will simply keep on trying.
Biographical Note

Born in 1940 and educated in Australia, John Finnis came to Oxford in 1962 as a Rhodes scholar, and has been a fellow of University College and a lecturer and reader in law at the university since 1966–7. He has been a barrister at Gray’s Inn since 1972, an adviser on constitutional matters to Australian state governments and to the UK House of Commons, and a member of English,
British and Irish Catholic Bishop's committees on bio-ethical and nuclear issues.

Among a large number of books and articles on legal, jurisprudential, moral, theological and philosophical subjects, special mention should be made of *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism*, written in collaboration with Joseph M. Boyle Jr. and Germain Grisez, to be published in April 1987 by the Clarendon Press. In it, readers will find a more detailed working out of the ideas which are presented in brief here.

**Editorial Comment**

These answers were communicated in an interview on October 30, 1986, in University College, Oxford. What may impress the reader most in these pages is the uncompromising way in which Dr Finnis accepts both the prudential arguments in favour of a policy of continuing nuclear deterrence, and the moral arguments against. (The kernel of the moral case can be found under *Moral Considerations* in the answers to questions (iii) and (iv).) This is very unusual. Although it seems that many people are drawn in these two directions, it is rare for them both to be followed through as consistently as this. Usually we avoid what we see as the threat of internal inconsistency by saying that nuclear deterrence is either both prudentially wise and morally right, or both prudentially unwise and morally wrong. The remarkable results of not doing this, but of following the tension through to the end, can be seen in the two paragraphs at the beginning of the final set of *Recommendations*.

**DR JOHN FINNIS**

*Global Policy*

1 *The History of the Past Forty Years*

(i) *Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?*

I think probably mainly nuclear deterrence.

(ii) *Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?*

Mutual possession of an invulnerable second strike nuclear force has, I think, been the main factor that has so far kept the peace at great power level. It has not, of course, prevented all wars, and it's also true that it is not altogether stable. But it's pretty stable.
Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has 'flexible response' dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

I don’t think that these are really true alternatives. If you are going to have an effective deterrent – especially an extended deterrent – then you need limited nuclear options, because the threat simply to escalate from nothing to all-out strategic exchange is less credible than the threat to do it by stages with time for everyone to opt out of the battle. And in order to mount this threat, you must plan for war-fighting – which means in a sense planning for superiority in at least some aspects or phases of the potential battle. But, as I say, this enhances deterrence.

The extent to which this is dangerous has, I think, not so much to do with lowering the threshold between conventional and nuclear war, as with generating a system of immense complexity, which under certain conditions could become unstable – especially under conditions of alert.

Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

Again I say ‘yes’ to both sides. If we could somehow unravel the whole inter-superpower setup and start again, then clearly we would not choose to have so many. In that sense there is a superfluity of weapons systems. And I don’t think that anyone, except for polemical purposes, would want to deny that size (which involves complexity) can be dangerous. But no one has been in charge of the whole ‘system’. Each has been faced by varying threats from the other side, and in these circumstances the size of the arsenals does not seem to be strategically pointless – especially if your aim is to defend an extended alliance. Almost everyone who has tried to manage Western deterrence policy has been tempted by the attractive idea of a much reduced, ‘minimum’ deterrent – but all of them have in the end decided that it is too dangerous. I think that within these terms of reference their reasoning has been essentially correct.

Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

‘Parity’ is not a proper synonym for ‘balance here’. ‘Parity’ suggests crude and unhelpful ideas of numerical equality, whereas ‘balance’ – meaning that each sort of threat that one side can pose is properly checked by some kind of counter-check – is, I think, essential to deterrent stability.

As to whether arms control negotiations have helped to achieve it – I’m
rather agnostic. There are quite strong arguments which suggest that arms
control negotiations have in some cases been destabilizing in their actual, not
intended, effects. For example, SALT I may be seen to have encouraged a
great explosion in warhead technology. But one gets into very refined assess-
ments when one tries to sort all this out.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by
strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of
technology and vested interest dictated
policies subsequently justified post hoc?

I think that, at the most basic level, strategic thinking has been decisive –
elementary thoughts such as these: we need a deterrent, we need an extended
deterrent, we need a graduated response, limited options, etc. But many of
the details have been controlled by what you are calling ‘the self-reinforcing
impetus of technology and vested interest’ and so on.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike
remain inconceivable for the foreseeable
future? OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate
and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

I think that a unilaterally determined first strike, out of the blue, from ‘ungen-
erated’ force postures to hot war in twenty-four hours, is extremely unlikely.
It is a very uninviting prospect for anyone to undertake. On the other hand,
against a background of political or military confrontation, the possibility that
one side may think that it has to ‘go first’ under conditions of great stress
arising out of mutually ‘ratcheted’ alerts is far from negligible. And the
existence of increasingly accurate offensive weapons makes that all the more
possible.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and OR Does the amount of information to be
intelligence facilities likely to remain processed, pressure of time and fear of
secure? preemption put command and control
systems under intolerable strain and make
inadvertent war more likely?

This is a very complicated matter, and, when you look at the literature, you
find that there are powerful considerations on each side. The trouble is that
you can never tell what the ultimate pay-off will be. Vulnerable command and
control facilities may be dangerous; on the other hand they may make a first
strike less inviting to the enemy, in so far as it is clear that their destruction
will trigger their side’s whole system. Again, under certain conditions the
amount of information which electronic systems make available to decision-
makers will help them to avoid error, but under conditions of alert, the flood
of information may make error more possible. Errors are possible out of igno-
rance, but they are also possible out of a superfluity of information.
If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end hostilities swiftly?

Nobody knows. There would probably be tremendous pressure to end hostilities swiftly and on almost any terms. On the other hand there would be tremendous pressure to plunge on in the hope of salvaging something from the wreckage. Nobody knows.

Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence?

In many cases they clearly reinforce deterrence. But they also lower the nuclear threshold. These are not alternatives. As to detailed questions about whether Pershing and Cruise were necessary to balance SS2Os, I do not feel competent to make a judgement. It is not something that I have thought worthwhile to investigate very carefully.

Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons?

I think that the Strategic Defence Initiative is partly the product of morally inspired hopes that we can somehow simply levitate out of the appalling quagmire, which everyone recognizes that we are in. And, indeed, if we could create the system which the planners envisage overnight, and share it with the other side, then that might well be an immense change for the better. But there is no prospect of this, and the process of getting there would be very dangerous, because it would look to the other side as if we were aiming to disarm him, particularly since the Reagan administration has made it clear that it intends to keep its offensive capability right through the process. Admiral Poindexter's remark the other day, that he could not see how anyone could object to SDI because it is purely defensive, is alarming, if he meant it seriously; it is blind to the inevitable strategic assessment the Soviets will make (or else supposes that his audience is blind to that). In the meantime, the threat of SDI may have helped to bring the Soviet Union back to the negotiating table. But bringing someone to the bargaining table is not the same as striking a bargain, and SDI may well play a major role in preventing that. Many influential American politicians support SDI only as a bargaining chip, but the administration seems to deny that it is one.

Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies?

There may be certain causal links between the size of the arsenals held by the established nuclear weapons powers and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.
to other powers, but I think that they are tenuous. If the great powers were to give up nuclear deterrence altogether, that might make a big difference. But I don’t think that relatively small reductions have much effect.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is ‘arms-control’ an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

I have no lively anticipation that the current talks will yield anything much at all. I don’t think that there is much prospect in general of gaining stability or disarmament measures from multilateral negotiation. Each responsible person involved in these processes must think how much better it would be if we could do the same essential job of deterring the other side with much less expenditure of resources and many fewer of the risks that come from huge complexity and ‘overkill’. The apparently dramatic offers made on either side are partly a genuine attempt to levitate out of the quagmire. But no one is in full command of any of these giant political systems, and, among other things, neither can trust the other not to cheat or take advantage of the opportunities that bargaining opens up. Neither is willing to take the chance involved in an acceptance which measures up to an offer, or an offer which is likely to meet acceptance. Nevertheless, a world in which people are still talking to one another in this sort of way seems better than one in which they simply turn their backs on one another.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely?

I think that war would become significantly more likely. At the very least, I think that the kind of brinkmanship which typically generates wars would become much more attractive as an option – and this would be more likely to result in a major war.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war?

If one could imagine a major conventional war that did not in fact escalate into a nuclear war, it would probably be as frightful as certain forms of very limited nuclear war; but it would not be as terrible as the sort of nuclear war that is currently being planned for.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out?

I am sure that nuclear weapons would reappear, given enough time to reconstruct them.
(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility?

What the previous question has demonstrated is that global nuclear disarmament is very risky. It carries all sorts of appalling possible consequences. In that sense it is 'undesirable'. But we should not leap from there to the conclusion that therefore we must prefer the alternative; the alternative in this case is the present sort of nuclear confrontation, which is in itself 'undesirable' and also carries other appalling risks. So, which is the least undesirable? This is the bottom line consideration and is an entirely different question. As I will be arguing later, it is folly to think that you can compute the probabilities against the values at stake, in other words the anticipated consequences, and arrive at a sum which will enable you to say 'therefore this option is the more desirable'. The sum cannot be done. So all we can say here is that the anticipated consequences of global nuclear disarmament are in many respects extremely uninviting.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely?

They are both true, aren't they? That's all one can say.

B NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe?

This is once again not something that I have given much attention to, but, if I am forced to answer, I will say – yes, the Soviet Union and her allies have a dangerous conventional military superiority in Europe.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power which will take advantage of unilateral Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control agreements by Western determination and strength?

I think that there are two big questions being run together here. One is: given mutual nuclear deterrence, what are the factors that are operating on the Soviet Union? The other is: what would be likely to happen if we unilaterally gave up our nuclear deterrent, leaving them with a nuclear capability, or if both sides gave up their nuclear deterrents?

In answer to the first, I would say that the Soviet Union that exists today
has from the start been constrained by Western strength and has in many ways been transformed as a result.

In answer to the second, it seems likely that Western unilateralism might encourage an intrinsic expansionism, which springs from, among other things, Soviet ideology. Mutual nuclear disarmament would have unpredictable consequences. As I have said, it might lead to dangerous confrontations between East and West, and therefore make war more likely – although the situation would be so different to the one that exists today that it's very hard to say. Who was being expansionist might not in every case be clear. The Soviet Union has an ideology which authorizes and encourages unilateral expansionism, without excluding any means. The West has far-flung interests, which it is prepared to defend or attain by the use of military power, for example in the Middle East. It has an ideology which encourages expansionism, if not by any means, then by means which include military pressure of a kind that can lead to confrontations and war.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons?  

For NATO to use her nuclear weapons might well be strategically suicidal. On the other hand, it would seem to me to be dangerous if she were not able to threaten to make early use of them.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing?  

As I have said earlier, this is not a matter which I have tried to investigate very closely, and I am not prepared to conclude that NATO's policy is illegitimate or mistaken.

(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence?  

There is much to be said for exploring less dangerous alternative strategies. But exploring is one thing and finding is another.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported?  

In a sense it is possible to agree with both sides here. Given the fact that we
need American support, we had better keep them in the front line and tie in
our defences to their nuclear capability. This is certainly a very substantial
guarantee of Western European security. On the other hand, if everything
went wrong and we were dragged into a military superpower clash, that would
probably be the end of Europe. There is much that is attractive about the idea
of Western European neutrality. But there would be immense costs – and we
would be in danger of falling a prey to one of the two superpowers – the less
attractive of the two!

Would Western unilateral nuclear
disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are
suggestions that the West should take the
lead in offering unilateral disarmament
initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do
radical nuclear disarmers consciously or
unconsciously serve Soviet interests and
threaten to undermine Western defences?

Let me take these questions one by one, starting on the left. Would Western
unilateral disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Yes, undoubtedly. Would
unilateral initiatives be the thin end of this wedge? Not necessarily, unless
they were intended to be. The bottom line of nuclear deterrence is so far
away from particular unilateral disarmament initiatives, and in the end it’s the
bottom line that matters most. Do radical disarmers serve Soviet interests?
My reading of much of the radical disarmament literature is – yes, many of
them do. A number are unrealistic about the nature of Soviet power and
unconsciously serve Soviet interests. Some of them, I suspect, do so con-
sciously. Turning to the right-hand side, I do think that unilateral initiatives
of this kind are the only way to reverse the arms race. They are a risky way,
and might not succeed in reversing it. But they are probably the only way,
and I think that we should be prepared to take some risks. Finally, I do
not think that multilateral disarmers who reject those policies are necessarily
insincere – although some probably are.

C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

Is Britain’s deterrent a weapon of last
resort which guarantees her sovereignty and
independence and protects her from nuclear
blackmail?

I do think that all probable uses would be likely to be suicidal. But it does not
follow from that this the British deterrent does not protect Britain from many
forms of nuclear blackmail.
(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making?

I think that it is largely a rationalization to say that one of the main reasons why Britain retains an independent deterrent is to contribute to a second centre of decision-making in Europe. That is not why we have it. It may be the case that in fact others in Europe welcome it as a second centre and think that it usefully complicates Soviet calculations – but this is not in itself a sufficient reason for keeping it.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it?

Although the considerations on either side here are reasonable, I think that for most people they are peripheral. The deep consideration is the one in number (i).

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive?

The saving would not be all that great. It would not buy much in the way of conventional strength. This again is not a decisive argument.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe?

I think that this is also marginal. We might lose a certain amount of influence with the United States. I don’t think that the fact that France would be left as the only European nuclear power makes much difference one way or the other – although there are refined calculations that it might encourage the Germans to go nuclear, which would be dangerous. On the other side, I do not believe that it would help to break the nuclear log-jam or influence other powers to go non-nuclear.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century?

I haven’t any special reason to question the political-economic-strategic calculations made or expounded by Michael Quinlan.¹ (See footnote page 229.)
Dr John Finnis

2. NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance?

All talk about working towards ‘an overall non-nuclear strategy’ in NATO is just fantasy. And the belief that one somehow improves one’s moral position by getting rid of one’s own weapons, while retaining one’s place within an alliance whose whole policy involves ‘flexible response’ based on nuclear deterrence, seems to me largely illusory. Of course we have a moral obligation to get rid of our own weapons, and therefore we should get rid of them. So far I agree with Labour Party policy. But we should also get out of an alliance whose fundamental strategy is nuclear.

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?

For the same reason we should also get rid of American nuclear bases. It is clearly the case that it would weaken Western defences, but we must do it on moral grounds.

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally?

If we got rid of our own nuclear weapons, got out of the Alliance and removed American nuclear bases – in other words, if we became effectively neutral – I don’t see any special reason why the Soviet Union would want to target us for actual massive nuclear attack. I just do not believe the story that everyone is under direct nuclear threat, no matter what their stance in the world.

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella?

Perhaps in those circumstances, no matter what Neil Kinnock may say, we would still be effectively under the American umbrella. But that would be up to the Americans.

Moral Considerations

(i) **Is it morally right to pursue the policy least OR Are there actions which are in themselves likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong?**

I say 'yes' to the right-hand side.

As to the left, there are two sources of confusion to be dispelled. First, it is an illusion to assume that we will be in a situation in which all our options are morally wrong, so that we are simply having to choose between moral evils. There has been no demonstration that we are in such a position, nor do I believe that such a demonstration of a true moral dilemma is even conceivable.

Secondly, it is a fundamental mistake to think that we can weigh up greater and lesser risks, and greater and lesser quantities of human suffering, measure them against one another, and thereby reach a morally significant conclusion. Goods, harms, risks, probabilities, and so on, are factors which pull in different directions and cannot be measured against one another. They are incommensurable.

(ii) **In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies? OR Is the only relevant point here that a nuclear exchange of almost any kind would in itself cause unimaginable suffering to largely civilian populations?**

Taking the statement implied on the left, we now apply this to the question of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies. In making our moral choice, we must of course be aware of the probability of success and attend to the relative costs of alternative policies. In this sense morality has a great deal to do with consequences. It's better not to go in blind, and to have as full a picture as possible of the resulting scenarios that we will be likely to finish up with if we choose in different ways. But this working out of the different scenarios will not in itself constitute or determine our moral judgement and choice. As I say, the relevant factors are in the end incommensurable, so that we cannot just feed in the data, turn the handle, and then expect to find out in this consequentialist way how we should act morally. For example, here we are faced with an impressive case for unilateral nuclear disarmament, based on the fear of the holocaust and the likelihood that this will come about if we carry on indefinitely as we are going now. And also with an impressive case for continuing to rely on nuclear deterrence, based at any given time on the quite low risk of the holocaust and the preservation of the immense goods of Western civilization against the dangers of being unjustly taken over. These, let us say, are the two alternative scenarios that our assessments picture for us. But there simply is no calculation that will show which is the more rational or moral of the two choices. In order to discover that, we do not rely on mechanical computation, but on all sorts of commitments that we have made.
in our earlier moral lives. We go for the option that is most continuous with the commitments that we have made, and the vocation that we as individuals and as a community have responded to, provided that that option does not violate a moral absolute, or involve choosing (intending) something 'in itself wrong', as you have put it.

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look OR Is there no such thing as a fully deployed no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent weapons system which is a bluff? Is to deploy nuclear weapons to intend to use their use? them in certain circumstances?

Well, I think that what is suggested on the left is often advanced as a way out of an otherwise uncomfortable position, especially by Christian moralists. They want to retain the deterrent, but recognize that it would be utterly immoral to use it and see that it seems to be geared up for use if need be. So they try to turn it into a sort of bluff. But I am afraid they are mistaken. It isn't a bluff, nor could it be a bluff. Even if, as is logically possible, but exceedingly unlikely, all the weapons operators were bluffing, so that on the day when the orders went out no buttons were pressed, even so it is logically impossible for the policy as a whole to be a bluff, and there are many people who participate in the policy who cannot be bluffing. Let me take this by stages. The policy does not announce itself as a bluff. It declares itself to be the policy of having the capability of wiping out cities in tit-for-tat city swaps and/or in final retaliation, and of having the will to use that capability. That policy is reiterated every year by the United States, and occasionally by the United Kingdom and France. 'We have the capability and the will' is the threat. So the policy itself is not to bluff, and cannot be to bluff. And it is that policy that you and I are invited to subscribe to or detach ourselves from. So when we vote for it, for example, in Parliament or in Congress or at the polls, we cannot be bluffing. We may be hoping that other people are bluffing, but we cannot ourselves be bluffing in the part we play as voters. Similarly, nor can people who build nuclear weapons or send nuclear submarines out, which are then out of their control. They are simply doing their bit for a policy which is not one of bluff; in other words, when we vote for the policy, we say 'yes' to the announced intention to use. Our motive, of course, is to prevent situations arising in which we might 'have to' execute our threats of use. Non-use is our hope; preservation of peace with freedom is our motive. But our intention is to have the weapons, and, so the policy says, to use them if we have to. Reagan's and Thatcher's innermost intentions are irrelevant to the moral choice that we are asked to make now. No one is asked to subscribe to Reagan's and Thatcher's innermost intentions. We are only asked to subscribe to the policy, which does not alter whenever Reagan or Thatcher secretly alter their innermost intentions.

(As to the idea that we might keep our weapons, but change our announced policy and say that we will never use them – the policy would be almost
unintelligible. As announced it would have virtually no deterrent capability. And if, in order to give it deterrent capability, we continued to deploy and update our forces, our total policy could only seem to be one of keeping our options open, which once again is a kind or policy of use – a conditional intention or at least willingness to use).

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence? Is a conditional intention to cause indiscriminate and disproportionate suffering of this kind, whether admonitory, preemptive or retaliatory, ruled out by Just War theory? Was it wrong to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945?

Those who say that if deterrence failed there are certain morally legitimate uses of nuclear weapons, may be imagining restricted strikes against missile fields or fleets at sea and so on. But this is to abstract from the necessities of a total military strategy. It is not sane to threaten to use nuclear weapons unless this is backed up by one or both of the following two threats. First, the threat to make tit-for-tat attacks on the other side’s cities if he has made an attack on your cities. You must threaten to city-swap, lest your cities be simply taken out one by one until you are blackmailed into surrender. Secondly, and I think that this is probably the more basic, you must say ‘if you make an all-out nuclear attack on us and we are wiped out and have lost everything, you will regret it, because we will wipe you out’. This is the threat of final retaliation. There cannot be a coherent or effective nuclear deterrent strategy, within a context where both sides have nuclear weapons, which does not rely wholly or partly on one or both of these two threats. Since neither the threat of city-swapping, nor the threat of final retaliation, can conceivably be reconciled with ‘Just War Theory’, no nuclear deterrent strategy can be, either. But I prefer not to talk about ‘Just War’, let alone ‘Theory’. We are talking about an absolute norm of common and Christian morality: You must not intend to kill innocents (here, non-combatants).

As to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the dropping of the two atomic bombs on those cities was indeed morally wrong. In fact, as one can plainly see from the records of those who made the decision, neither the motive nor the intention was to attack military targets. The intention was simply to cause maximum damage in largely civilian areas in order to shock the Japanese out of the war – which it did. Even if Leonard Cheshire is right, and this was the only way in which the war could have been ended short of a much more costly invasion of Japan, it was still clearly morally wrong and should certainly not have been done.

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and world poverty and disease? Is it a scandal that such huge resources are devoted to the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and not to the alleviation of suffering?

In a way both alternatives are mistaken. Nuclear weapons are one of the
cheapest components in our defence, so it is wrong just to point the finger at them. On the other hand, the enormous expense involved in the huge enterprise of defending ourselves against the Soviet Union undoubtedly does contribute to the suffering of the poorest of the poor – and the costs of the Soviet's own efforts even more so.

(vi) Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons? or Does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?

Because, as we have seen, the deployment of nuclear weapons is only rational within a strategic framework which includes the threat and capability to city-swap and carry out final retaliation, Christian doctrine requires us to condemn their deployment. If it was not for these two threats, it does not seem to me that Christian teaching would necessarily condemn either the use or deployment of nuclear weapons any more than it condemns the use or deployment of other weapons. What is mistaken is the attempt made by many of the churches in their official pronouncements to suggest that the systems are or can become purely counter-military, or that they can become a bluff. On inspection, both of these suggestions are clearly unrealistic. The facts have not been fully attended to. Quite often, of course, governments deliberately try to draw a veil of obscurity over these facts. (The British are more mealy-mouthed than the French over this.) So people need to engage in a bit of strategic analysis to uncover them. Once the facts are established the application of Christian doctrine becomes clear enough. The minimum that the churches ought to say is this: 'If our nuclear deterrent system involves either or both of the two threats to city-swap and carry out final retaliation, then it cannot be morally justified, even if it preserves peace and justice and lives which could not otherwise be preserved.' That would be sufficient. It would then be up to Christians as men of the world to judge what the facts about our threats actually are.

Recommendations

As you can see, broadly speaking I agree on prudential grounds with those who defend current policies. But these policies turn out on analysis to be clearly and irrevocably immoral. So what should be done? I have two types of recommendation to make. If I had my way, we would give up our nuclear weapons immediately and unconditionally. We would give them up very fast, because we are bound to renounce the deterrent policy immediately, and because the process of more leisurely dismantling would be dangerous – the Soviets would have such an incentive to prevent us backsliding on our resolve to give them up. So that is my basic recommendation.

But now I am faced with your list of possible courses of action in a world where my basic proposal is not going to be accepted. So what I say is this. Don't mix morals with strategy. If you are determined to go on being immoral by keeping some form of nuclear deterrent, then at least make the damn thing
safe. This may well involve you in updating it, complexifying it, enhancing it. In fact, I think that one should be prepared to take some risks in order to get rid of some of the more dangerous features of the present system. But don’t let us kid ourselves that by doing this we are making it more morally satisfactory – except in the sense that it is always morally right to reduce risks.

1 I think that there is a case for a freeze, although it is not conclusive.
2 If we could be sure that the other side was also doing the same, this would be good (See A2 (A) (v)).
3 This does not seem to me to be critical, but, given appropriate verification, yes.
4 A declaration of No First Use might be quite dangerous in the European theatre.
5 Up to a certain depth this would be safe and desirable. Beyond that it becomes actually destabilizing (See A1(iv)).
6 That would be nice.
7 So would this.
8 As I have said, despite the great risks involved in universal nuclear disarmament, we are clearly under an obligation to do anything that would get rid of our threats of city-swapping and final retaliation. But there is no such thing as a ‘process of universal nuclear disarmament’ and no-one can bring such a process into being by his own decision. It’s an illusory question (See A2(B)(iv)).
9 A minimum deterrent could be dangerous, particularly if one of the powers was at the same time committed to extended deterrence (See A1(iv)).
10 This depends upon a number of contingencies, such as whether the Russians are in it themselves, whether the Americans make this a prerequisite for their continuing to uphold the NATO Alliance, and so on.
11 See 4.
12 I am undecided. I would not favour unconditional cuts for the sake of it, but certain unconditional measures might help to break the log-jam.
13 Yes.
14 No. The withdrawal should be immediate.
15 See 6.
16 Yes.
17 I have no strong views (See C1(iv)).
18 This is unrealistic. Britain should immediately get out of an alliance whose fundamental strategy is nuclear (See C2(i)).
19 Britain should also get rid of American nuclear bases (See C2(ii)).
20 See 18.
Biographical Note

Born in 1948, Lawrence Freedman was a Research Fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford between 1974 and 1975, at the International Institute for Strategic Studies between 1975 and 1976, and at the Royal Institute of International Affairs between 1976 and 1978. From 1978 to 1982 he was Head of Policy Studies at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, and since 1982 has been Professor of War Studies at King’s College, London.
Among a large number of books and articles, special mention can be made of *Britain and Nuclear Weapons* (1980), and *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (1981).

Editorial Comment

This set of answers was given during the course of an interview in King's College, London, on August 14, 1986. Perhaps what may strike the reader most is Professor Freedman's insistence throughout that these are nearly all highly complex issues to which there are no clear-cut or simple answers. The question of nuclear weapons is only part of a much broader set of problems (A2(vii)), nuclear deterrence theory itself is deeply ambiguous (Aliii), and there are no simple remedies (Biv). This applies as much to sweeping official claims, such as those made on behalf of the American Strategic Defence Initiative (A2(v)), as to the proposals of the more radical critics of current policy (Bvii). The result is that, seen from these polarized positions, Professor Freedman's is an influential, but ambivalent, voice.

**PROFESSOR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN**

*A Global Policy*

1 *The History of the Past Forty Years*

(i) **Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?** OR **Has it mainly been other factors?**

I think that, if nuclear weapons had not existed, war between the great powers might have been more likely — but by no means inevitable. As it is, fear of nuclear war has probably been an important restraining factor at key moments — perhaps more important in the first twenty years after the Second World War, when the international system was still settling down, than recently. For example, in the absence of such a threat, it is possible to imagine a Soviet seizure of West Berlin, or the temptation for America to have intervened in Hungary in 1956.

(ii) **Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?** OR **Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?**

An enemy's possession of an invulnerable second strike strategic nuclear force means that there are profound disincentives to launching a first strike should a war seem imminent. In theory, mutual possession does introduce a degree of neutralization, which perhaps ought to invite things lower down the spectrum. But this has not happened, largely, I think, because of the fear that
somewhere or other nuclear weapons could get used, and this might then escalate.

(iii) **Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war?**

OR **Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has ‘flexible response’ dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?**

To begin with, flexible response does not necessarily mean limited nuclear options. By and large it was introduced with conventional options in mind. Nor were the limited nuclear options that were envisaged necessarily of a war-fighting sort. They were, if anything, thought of more as a signal to indicate the terrible things that might happen if the aggression continued.

Having said that, there does seem to be a problem here. I think that the existence of such a diversity of nuclear weapons around the place, and such a variety of ideas about how they may be employed, does increase the possibility that they could be used. But this is all part of deterrence. Clearly, the paradox of deterrence is that it is reinforced to the extent that you think that nuclear weapons can be used – but, the more that you think that you can use them, the lower the threshold of their use and the more dangerous the situation seems to be. So there is always a balance to be struck. My own view on this is that it is not that the use of nuclear weapons has in fact become more likely, but that even a very small percentage chance that they may be used is in itself deterring.

I do not think that military planners have in general been aiming for war-fighting superiority. They do tend to believe that they need to have things to do should deterrence fail, but very few think seriously in terms of the possibility of achieving a meaningful victory in a nuclear war. I don’t think most European planners believe for a moment that you can fight a nuclear war along conventional lines.

(iv) **Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence?**

OR **Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?**

Well, again there is a tension here. There are arguments both ways. On the one hand, you can say that large and complicated arsenals reinforce deterrence by increasing apparent risk. On the other hand, when you spread the arsenals too wide, command and control problems may arise, which could be dangerous. I do think that a lot of the systems we have at the moment are unnecessary. So there is superfluity. But that does not necessarily mean that they are dangerous. I do not think that ‘overkill’ is necessarily more dangerous than ‘kill’. In fact ‘kill’ may even be more dangerous, because the calculations may then become rather delicate and you may get it wrong.

I do not, by the way, think that ‘worse case analysis’ has in general been a
determining factor here. It has been an element, but cannot be said to have driven the process.

(v) **Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it?**

These are very complex relations. The idea of parity has at times seemed to be a suitable and generally acceptable objective for arms control negotiations, but has often in practice turned out to be rather elusive. There have been successes, such as the ABM treaty, which, I think, has been a stabilizing force. But you can also argue that the idea of parity in arms control negotiations has encouraged imitation, force-matching, and so on. It’s difficult to assess this, because we are dealing with a complex process, and you can’t prove that the same sorts of thing wouldn’t have been happening anyway.

Much the same applies to the idea of ‘Negotiation from strength’. By and large it is probably the case that using ‘bargaining chips’ in order to negotiate from strength leaves you with the strength of the chips rather than negotiations. But this is hard to judge. For example, if, as some see as possible, we get an INF agreement this year, it would in part be a vindication of the idea that in some cases you can successfully bargain from strength. But it all depends. The threat of a developed ABM system by the United States has undoubtedly had an effect as a bargaining chip, whereas I don’t think that other things, like MX, have. This is one of those arguments that is not a general rule, but on occasion may apply.

(vi) **Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking?**

A bit of each. For example, you can’t say that SDI has been technologically created, because the technology is not yet there. It is a strategic idea. And what is written on the right-hand side here is a way of describing things which aren’t quite as sinister and stark as that. On the other hand, there are certain imperatives within an organization towards continuity, towards following traditional patterns, towards doing things the way they’ve always been done. And this had been a very powerful factor. Then, after that, I think that it is an interaction between technology and strategic thinking.

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1. ‘Missile Experimental’, now known as ‘Peacekeeper’, the main United States ICBM development for the late 1980s and 1990s.
2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future?

I am definitely with those who believe that it's inconceivable.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure?

No systems of this kind can be absolutely secure. There will always be vulnerabilities. And our command and control systems, like any others, would be at risk if there were a major crisis deteriorating towards war. There would be intolerable strain in an intolerable situation. As in any conflict, if the commanders panic, then all sorts of things could happen. But in different circumstances it could also be dangerous if they are not properly alarmed when they should be. You can't be dogmatic. Nevertheless, this is certainly an important issue that requires looking at.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end hostilities swiftly?

The answer is that we cannot be sure what would happen. It might be stopped, or it might escalate. If it came to it, we could be grateful that we had options that gave us hope of limiting the conflict. But we would be very unwise to work on the assumption that we can control matters, because that might well prove to be a dangerous illusion.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence?

The two are not contradictory. Reinforcing deterrence often requires a lowering of the nuclear threshold. But I would distinguish between the longer-range and the short-range systems. Systems like Cruise and Pershing II have, by and large, been helpful and positive in their influence on Soviet calculations - in particular, by denying them the thought that they could maintain Soviet territory as a sanctuary in war. But I have less time for battlefield systems, which on the whole probably do just lower the nuclear threshold without significantly reinforcing deterrence.

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons?

The answer is quite easy. No. It does not offer the prospect of a defence against
nuclear weapons, nor is it likely to affect deterrence. The whole thing is based on illusions and on faulty strategic judgement. It is little more than a cobbled together series of research programmes that have been going on anyway, and in ten years time will be seen as little more than a footnote. It will be interesting to talk about it in a nostalgic sort of way. That’s all.

(vi) Is the threat of ‘horizontal’ nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

It’s hard to show that any given potential proliferator is likely to be particularly influenced by, say, whether or not Britain stays in the nuclear business. And, so far as concerns the superpowers, a convincing case can be made the other way. You can say that by diminishing the superpower’s nuclear guarantee to their allies you are creating incentives for proliferation. To some extent the Chinese thought that they needed nuclear weapons themselves, because they no longer believed in the Russian guarantee in the late 1950s. The French felt the same about the Americans. Similar influences can be said to be operating today with countries like Taiwan, South Korea, or, to a certain extent, Israel. By and large, the incentives for proliferation are found within the security environment of the potential proliferators, and that is where policy has to operate. Overall, I do think that proliferation must be seen as a danger, and this is not at the moment a disaster area.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR ‘arms-control’ an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

It depends what you think are the main sources of instability. The trouble with so much of the debate is that it tends to be too narrow. There is too much exclusive emphasis on nuclear weapons, and not enough on the broader political factors, such as East-West relations in general, which are the ones that make the nuclear arsenals stabilizing or destabilizing, and give the stimulus. Nuclear weapons are important in international politics, but so are conventional weapons. They are important in East-West relations, but differences go well beyond that. So there may be a relationship between arms control negotiations and political stability, but it is a tenuous one. The best that arms control can do is consolidate an existing stability, not create one. The fundamental sources of stability and instability are political, and that is what needs to be worked at.

Turning to the right-hand side, it again depends what we are talking about. Is it going to mean total nuclear disarmament? Is it going to be partial? If partial, are you sure that you will be in a safer relationship as a result? Is it really the case that less means safer? There are a lot of obvious questions to
be asked here. There is certainly plenty of waste and surplus capacity that we can do without. But you could have a degree of disarmament that made very little difference one way or the other. Or doing without it might have important political consequences that are difficult to foresee. Again, the idea of a ‘minimum deterrent’ is not straight-forward either. By what criteria do we judge this? By numbers? By missions? Will the calculations become more delicate, and the situation therefore less stable, as a result? Are we to keep graded options? How will this affect the guarantee that the United States has been asked to provide for Europe? The lower the ‘minimum’, the more questions will be raised in Western Europe. It may challenge the credibility of extended deterrence. And so on.

So I don’t see any of these measures as panaceas. The overall situation is extremely complicated, and the problem of nuclear weapons is only a part of it.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely?

Yes. Possibly. You would have removed one of the inhibitions against war. I’m not as convinced as are some others that, if we abandoned the nuclear deterrent, there would be war in Central Europe. I don’t think that the conventional situation in itself provides incentives to war. But there might well be a greater likelihood of US-Soviet skirmishing on the peripheries.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war?

It depends how limited the nuclear war was. Obviously more people were killed by firebombing and so on at the end of the Second World War than in Hiroshima and Nagasaki – which counts as a kind of limited nuclear war. Major conventional war would be terrible. Let’s leave it at that.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be unintentioned would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out?

I think this is probably true. If it happened, nuclear weapons would probably be used anyway. There would be the likelihood that, during the course of a prolonged land war, both sides would be getting nuclear arsenals together. Even the assumption in the mid-to late-1940s when the Baruch Plan was being talked about, was that that’s what would happen. (See footnote on page 242.)
(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility? OR Is to argue that even multilateral nuclear disarmament is not desirable to give up all hope of a rational world-order?

I think that what Reagan and Gorbachev say about wanting complete nuclear disarmament is an illusion. I don’t think that politicians should peddle illusions. I don’t think you will ever get rid of the thing. You will never get rid of war itself. All you can do is to marginalize them both, so that they become less and less important in international affairs. That may indeed be a worthwhile object, but it requires a different set of policies from the almost exclusive concern with reducing nuclear weapons stocks, which seems to pre-occupy some people. Nuclear arsenals will be with us indefinitely. We live in the nuclear age.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely? OR Do the years before 1914 show what happens when military planning and the arms race control political choices? Do present strategies make nuclear war almost inevitable under likely future conditions? Is global nuclear disarmament the only rational policy?

I think that analogies like this are very dangerous. The situation now is different to the situation as it was in either 1914 or 1939. And often the analogy is in any case based on a misapprehension of what was going on at the time. There are things to be learnt from those occasions, but I don’t think they are necessarily the simple lessons that we are sometimes told that we should learn. Study history, but don’t draw too many simple analogies from it.

B NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? OR Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

This is very important. I’m probably somewhere in between. The Soviet Union has taken conventional capabilities very seriously indeed and has impressive armed forces. They are well trained and well positioned, and they have thought about mobilization strategies and so on. On the other hand, I think that NATO could probably cope with the Warsaw Pact better than NATO leaders normally suggest. I am sure that Soviet Commanders do not feel that they have reached a point of overwhelming war-fighting superiority. They themselves are well aware of key weaknesses that could be readily exploited. But I would not say that the two sides are ‘evenly matched’. That would be putting it too strongly. Apart from anything else, they are not trying to do the same sort of thing.

1. A plan presented by Bernard Baruch on behalf of the United States Government to the first meeting of the Atomic Energy Commission in 1946. It proposed the handing over of all potential nuclear war-making activities to international control and the destruction of existing stocks of weapons. It was rejected by the Soviet Union because it would perpetuate the advantages held by the United States.
(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power or Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?

Although there are elements of truth in it, I do not think that conventional Western wisdom about the Soviet Union's being a simple 'expansionist power' is very helpful. The searing experiences of the last war should not be forgotten. The Soviet Union is conducting a diplomacy in which it is looking for reassurances as much as it is making threats. But the two alternatives offered here are not mutually exclusive. Encircled and threatened powers have often been expansionist in the past – that's how we got our empire! I think that the Soviet Union went into Afghanistan because it felt encircled and threatened. So its very weaknesses can make it quite dangerous. Part of the problem here is that one of its weaknesses is ideological, which, living in the way we do, we cannot help but inflame. So the West needs a tactful diplomacy, sensitive to time and occasion, which is realistic and flexible. It does not need grand gestures and ostentatious symbols, which are in any case a bad way of conducting international relations.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? or Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

If it came to it, NATO's use of nuclear weapons probably would be suicidal. So I would prefer it if, in force planning, there were a presumption on our part that we would not use nuclear weapons first. This raises quite large issues, given the symbolism of what has been said so often in the past. But there are things that we could do in this direction, such as reduce the number of battlefield nuclear systems and instead give more thought to equivalents on the conventional side.

But I am against a declaration of No First Use, first, because I don't think that it would be believable. And, secondly, because of the effect on deterrence. If we were actually moving into a crisis, I think that a lot of the people who are now clamouring for such a declaration would be begging for it to be ignored. If Western leaders said 'we will not use nuclear weapons first' and Soviet leaders said 'nor will we, so let's have war,' there would be widespread alarm.
(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing? Does the West initiate nearly all phases of the nuclear arms race and continue to enjoy a substantial lead in most areas? Is the nuclear 'overkill' such that the West could offer a nuclear 'freeze' or unconditional cuts without risk?

I don't think that the balance is particularly delicate. One of the problems here is that we are dealing with elements of political perception, which in some cases can make the situation seem potentially unstable. But, by and large, we probably have enough options already not to have to match everything that the Soviets are doing. Turning to the right-hand side, it's true that the West has initiated many of the phases of the nuclear arms race, but this is by no means overwhelmingly true. The first ABM system was Soviet deployed, the first anti-satellite system was Soviet deployed, the first ICBM tests were Soviet. It's not true in all areas.

I think that the trouble with the freeze is that it would freeze the bad along with the good. It's a bit indiscriminate. It's a simple idea, but not easy to do – there are enormous negotiating problems. I don't think that it would be disastrous if there were a freeze, though. As with many of these suggestions, I'm relatively indifferent to them, because I think that they are oversold. I feel much the same about the idea of unconditional Western cuts. There have been unconditional Western cuts, for example to certain battlefield systems, but they do not seem to have made much of an impression. It was just sensible from our own point of view – we didn't need them. Once again, this is an instrument that we might consider using in certain circumstances. At the right time it can sometimes work. But you have to know what you are doing. It's not a cure-all.

(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence? Should NATO exploit her lead in 'emerging technology' to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

'Forward defence' simply means defending the inner German border. This may not be sound militarily, because it is a very difficult thing to do, but it has to be done in order to satisfy the West Germans. It can hardly be said to be destabilizing. As for 'deep strike', in essence it hardly counts as a new strategy (although FoFA partly does, I suppose). We have had it for years in terms just of interdiction capabilities. If you don't interdict, then basically what you are saying is that the Warsaw Pact forces' logistical problems are eased dramatically. In any case, interdiction of this kind is not the same as an offensive capability. To create a full invasion force you need, not just aircraft to reach Soviet territory, etc., but masses of troops, a huge logistical back-up, and so on.

1. Follow-on Forces Attack. The strategy of countering an enemy assault by attacking his follow-on forces.
2. The ability to deny an enemy immunity in his build-up of attacking forces.
Some alternative strategies are quite interesting and are worth looking at. Greater use of militias, greater use of fortifications, and so on, seem to me to be admirable in many ways. But only as supplements to, not replacements of, current defences. You would still have to have an effective airforce, for example. ‘Emerging technology’ works in all sorts of ways, not just in favour of defence.

**(vi)** Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported?

I think that Western Europe could move further in the direction of becoming more self-reliant and independent, but our security still basically depends upon our links with the Americans. Some people may not like American policy in Libya or the Middle East or Central America, but this should not cloud their judgement of what we need in Europe. We should remember why we were desperate for the Americans to come and help us twice this century. And how, before Russian and American power sobered us up, we were not exactly one big happy family. Although political conditions seem to be improving now, we will need our close links with America for the foreseeable future. It is possible to imagine an effective alliance with the United States without the presence of large numbers of American troops in Europe. But they have been here for a long time now and have become symbols. The political consequences of trying to do something different could be very destabilizing. It could be seen as a comment on the durability of the Alliance.

A European nuclear weapon-free zone is little more than a slogan. It doesn’t mean much. If the Soviet Union is not included, there is no such weapon-free zone. If the Soviet Union is included, then so must the United States be, and we are no longer just talking about Europe. The idea collapses.

**(vii)** Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

The trouble with a number of those who argue as on the right is that they see an arms race which needs to be reversed. Unfortunately, it’s not as simple as this. I don’t think that there is an arms race involved here in the first place. There is competition in certain areas, but arms decisions are not just determined by what the other side is doing. There are all sorts of factors at work. That’s why it’s so difficult to reverse the process by unilateral, bilateral or
multilateral measures – there isn’t any simple thing to reverse. It’s not like making two runners turn round and run in the opposite direction, or playing a film backwards. Too much emphasis is placed on unilateral initiatives. We have all taken unilateral initiatives of one sort or another – we have cut our navies unilaterally, for example. The results have not been spectacular.

But, turning to the left, I don’t think that it is useful to characterize unilateralists as serving Soviet interests. The Soviet Union often does not like them any more than NATO does. Members of END (European Nuclear Disarmament), for example, want to dismantle the Warsaw Pact as well as NATO, together with the Soviet system in Eastern Europe, a thought which the Soviet Union finds very alarming indeed.

There are no simple remedies. Some people, members of CND but not just them, do not like to talk in terms of complexities, and get very irritated when someone comes along who does not agree with them and does not just repeat word-for-word the latest government White Paper or Daily Telegraph leader. Unilateral measures may at times be helpful, but at others they may have little effect or even be counter-productive. It depends upon the circumstances.

C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain’s deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail? OR Would all possible uses of Britain’s ‘deterrent’ be suicidal? Is its only effect to encourage proliferation?

Any use of Britain’s deterrent against, say, the Soviet Union would be likely to be suicidal. But that is the problem with nuclear deterrence theory in general. The question is: are there possible circumstances in which our possession of nuclear weapons would mean that the Soviet Union was more likely to lay off us? The answer is probably ‘yes’. But the circumstances are unlikely and it’s a marginal argument. And I wouldn’t say that Britain’s deterrent guarantees anything – certainly not sovereignty and independence, which can be eroded by things like economic weakness.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making? OR Is the ‘second centre of decision making’ an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

For a variety of political reasons, not necessarily to do with deterrence, a number of Europeans are surprisingly enthusiastic about us as a nuclear power. I think that some European governments see it as a means of providing a European input into Alliance nuclear decision-making – and to some extent
as a balance to the French. So far as concerns deterrence, the argument about Soviet perceptions is largely a rationalization of an underlying uncertainty about the long-term reliability of the American nuclear guarantee. If it came to it, I am not convinced that an Anglo-French or European nuclear force would be an effective alternative. In any case, at the moment, within the context of NATO strategy, this is only marginal as an argument for the retention of a British nuclear force.

(iii) Does the US favor shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? OR Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

I think that this is once again marginal. I find the Americans rather muddled as to why we should keep our deterrent. If they think hard about it, they tend to conclude that in itself it is a bit of a waste of time and money. But they think that, because it’s psychologically important to us, it’s politically significant to them. They fear that, if we relinquish the nuclear option, we will no longer take ourselves seriously as a military power.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? OR Can Britain’s nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

I think that too much has been made of the question whether we can ‘afford’ our independent nuclear force. As an opportunity-cost the price is not outrageous, if you think that we need it. If you don’t think that we need it, then even five million pounds is too much. As it stands, alternatives are now likely to be as expensive, or even more expensive – depending again, of course, on what you think is necessary. And getting out of the nuclear business is unlikely to ease the pressure on other defence areas for more than a year or two. This is a relevant factor, but not a decisive one.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendency in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

Britain’s nuclear capabilities do give her influence in certain areas. We must not exaggerate this, but there is more to it than is recognized by the people who say that it’s all just delusions of grandeur. But there are many other forms of influence – a number of which we have not got!

If we were to decide to give up our nuclear deterrent, we should certainly try to gain as much from it as we could. We might be able to do good work along Ghandian lines in some quarters. But again it would be unwise to expect too much.
(vi) **Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century?**

In terms of hardware, I do think that investment in Trident is the best way to continue current policies. To the extent that the deterrent is partly seen as an insurance against American withdrawal, there might have been a case for looking at more national ways of doing it, but they would have been more expensive. And now, assuming that you are committed to having a deterrent, it's hard to think that there is a more cost-effective way of doing it. David Owen's alternatives might have made a lot of sense when he was Foreign Secretary, or in the early 1980s but, by the time the next election is over, billions will already have been spent. We might as well go on with it.

2 **NATO Forces and US Bases**

(i) **Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance?**

All my inclinations are against dual-capable and battlefield systems. I would have fewer of them. Britain could work towards this within a NATO context without major disruption, so long as she did not make a great song and dance about it. But I don't see what would be gained by Britain's making great gestures here.

(ii) **Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?**

Yes I think that it would be absolutely disastrous. It would be the most disastrous thing that a British government could do in this whole area. The effect on the Americans would be electric. The arguments that would be used to defend such a policy would be extremely offensive to the US Administration and to Congress. I just don't think that you can expel the Americans and then expect them to defend us. It is our own security that would suffer.

Do these bases erode British sovereignty? No more than, say, our membership of the EEC. It's a cost you pay. We always have the option of getting rid of them – which is not one that, for example, the Czechs have in their relationship with the Soviet Union.

(iii) **Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally?**

OR **Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any superpower confrontation unless bases are removed?**
If you asked the Norwegians or the Danes or the Dutch whether they thought that Soviet weapons were targeted on them, they would tell you that they did. When you live in a strategically awkward part of the world, as we do, you are a creature of your geographical position.

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US 'umbrella' than any other Western ally – or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

If the American nuclear umbrella were removed suddenly and dramatically, I do not think that many of us would feel particularly secure. A great many questions would be asked, most notably in West Germany. I don’t think that we would like the alternatives. I certainly would not feel more secure in those circumstances.

Moral considerations

(i) Is it morally right to pursue the policy least OR Are there actions which are in themselves likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong?

I tend towards the left-hand side. Not being a clever philosopher, there are some actions for which I can barely imagine a possible moral justification. But, by and large, I am a consequentialist, I suppose.

(ii) In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies? OR Is the only relevant point here that a nuclear exchange of almost any kind would in itself cause unimaginable suffering to largely civilian populations?

We are living in the nuclear age. We cannot escape having to work out our policies in terms of the possibility of nuclear war. There is often a jump in the argument of those on the right-hand side in your analysis. They seem to assume that there is somehow a policy readily at hand, which will free us from the obligation of having to think about the possible deaths of large numbers of civilians. There isn’t. If their main preoccupation is with the fact that, as long as they themselves don’t have nuclear weapons, they will not personally be responsible for using them, then I do not find this particularly uplifting.

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use? OR Is there no such thing as a fully deployed weapons system which is a bluff? Is to deploy nuclear weapons to intend to use them in certain circumstances?

This is very difficult. It’s unfortunate that the choice is so often presented in
these terms, because I don't think that either answer is entirely satisfactory. To take the left-hand side first, it is true that one can become insensitive to the implications of what one is doing. And, if you leave certain tools lying around, then you have to accept that someone may pick them up and use them. But deterrence in a way depends upon that possibility. Turning to the right-hand side, it would possibly have been better had nuclear weapons never been invented. But here we are with them; historically they have become an integral part of international relations. So we have to think what the consequences of abandoning them would be. It is irresponsible not to do so. We cannot just concern ourselves with our own conditional intentions. And as to those intentions themselves—well, no one is actually dying at the moment, and that must make a difference. The disincentives against using these weapons are substantial, and we can do a lot to make sure that decisions to use them would not be taken frivolously. And those disincentives themselves are in the end based on the possibility of use. There is no escape from this.

So it is a moral dilemma. I can't see it as anything other than that. But it is one that is not of my creation.

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence?

You can only judge the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the context of its time. As horrible things had been happening, moral restraints had already been reduced. It wasn't worse than other things that had been going on. I think that it's true that those taking the decision believed in all good faith that they were preventing something worse from happening. There are even a number of Japanese who will accept this now. Historical evidence is not so conclusive here. But that is not the point. At the time they had reason to believe that the alternative was going to be a full-scale invasion of Japan. It may not have been the right decision, but I don't think we can say that it was irretrievably immoral.

Although I am myself not very happy with Just War theory—people adopt various criteria rather uncritically and do not ask themselves about their relative weighting and so on—I think that there can be a sort of theory of Just Deterrence.

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and world poverty and disease? Is it a scandal that such huge resources are devoted to the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and not to the alleviation of suffering?

There are a number of answers to the implied claim on the right. First, money is not just being spent on weapons. Second, nuclear weapons cost a fraction...
of what is spent on conventional weapons. It is possible that cutting back on
the former may mean spending more on the latter. Third, we cannot assume
that any money saved would in fact be spent in the ways suggested. Finally,
one of the main causes of Third World misery is, not weapons spending
as such, but war. That's what you must work to prevent. And sometimes
expenditure on weapons prevents war.

(vi) Does Christian teaching allow the
deployment of nuclear weapons?

I am not a Christian. Pass.

OR Does Christian teaching condemn the
deployment of nuclear weapons?

Recommendations

The simple 'yes' and 'no' answers below are on their own misleading. They
should be understood to be qualified by the references that accompany them.

1 No (See B(iv)).

2 As already explained, I dislike the Strategic Defence Initiative (See
A2(A)(v)). It is based on illusions. But I have no objection to current
research programmes being continued. And I don't believe that a mora-
torium on either anti-satellite or strategic defence programmes would be
either verifiable or useful – how do you distinguish this research from
other, legitimate, areas? Questions of testing and deployment are much
more important.

3 A comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is, in general, a laudable objective. But
I think that it is a good idea whose time is past. It would have been very
influential two-and-a-half decades ago, when it was first mooted. It would
not make a lot of difference now. It might have certain beneficial effects,
but not, I think, the decisive influence that some people claim.

4 No (See B(iii)).

5 In certain areas cuts would be beneficial, and in general there is an
unnecessary superfluity of weapons systems. But there are important
caveats (See A1(iv), A2(A)(iv) & A2(A)(vii)).

6 So far as concerns Europe, no (See B(vi)).

7 Yes, but not too much should be expected of it (See A2(A)(vi)).

8 No (See A2(B)).

9 Does not apply. For minimum deterrence see A2(A)(vii).

10 There are problems with participating in SDI which I don't think need to
be elevated to matters of principle. The question is whether it is possible
to maintain an honest and consistent long-term perspective on the issues
raised by SDI. It would be a shame if the Allies allowed themselves to be
dragged into breaking the ABM Treaty simply in order to get American
contracts.

11 No (see B(iii)).
12 Too much emphasis is placed on the significance of unilateral initiatives (See B(iv) & B(vii)). In general, at the moment a is desirable as an objective for the West, but b is not (See A2(A)(iv)).

13 No (See 16).

14 No.

15 No (See B(vi).

16 No. I have always found the arguments for and against an independent nuclear force marginal. I suppose that when forced to the crunch, I would be reluctant to see us completely out of the nuclear business, partly as it is a question of continuity, partly because I do think that there are arguments for a European capability of some sort to avoid excessive dependence on the United States.

17 Does not apply (See CI(iv)).

18 No (See C2(i)).

19 No (See C2(i) & C2(ii)).

20 Does not apply.
Biographical Note

Born in 1936, Richard Harries served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Corps of Signals between 1955 and 1958, and was then ordained as a priest in the Church of England. After some years in a curacy in Hampshire, he moved on to become the vicar of All Saints, Fulham, between 1972 and 1981. Since then he has been Dean of King’s College, London, and has just been appointed Bishop of Oxford. Richard Harries is well-known as a broadcaster, and has written and contributed to a number of books on Christian prayer, and on the ways in which Christian teaching relates to contemporary life. Of particular
relevance here is Christianity and War in a Nuclear Age, published in 1986 by A. R. Mowbray & Co., where a fuller exposition of Dr Harries' ideas can be found.

Editorial Comment

These answers were given in an interview in Dr Harries' rooms in King's College, London, on December 11, 1986. They represent the thinking of an influential Christian commentator. Of special interest here are the answers under Moral Considerations, in which Dr Harries offers a carefully reasoned defence of the morality of continued nuclear weapon deployment, summed up in the answer to question (iv). Prudential considerations reached earlier about the high probability that nuclear deterrence will succeed, and that nuclear disarmament will not (A2(A) and A2(B)), are seen to have a critical bearing on the moral outcome. But Dr Harries takes the question of intention equally seriously, and only allows that continued deployment is morally justified, because an effective deterrent threat can be made which does not involve a conditional intention to inflict unacceptable direct damage on non-combatant populations.

THE REVD. RICHARD HARRIES

Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has OR Has it mainly been other factors?
kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?

Yes, I do think that it has been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable OR Does the threat of strategic nuclear
second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent retaliation, particularly against a similarly
war?
armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?

I think that mutual possession of such a force does prevent major war between the superpowers. But I also agree with the right-hand side that it invites what you nicely call 'sub-deterrent encroachment'. Under the nuclear umbrella all sorts of things have gone on in other parts of the world. And in Europe the crushing of resistance in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, for example, was accepted by the West for fear of nuclear retaliation. But it has certainly prevented a major war.
(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has ‘flexible response’ dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

To make deterrence credible, you must have some kind of flexible response. You cannot go straight from the failure of conventional forces to the threat of a full strategic exchange. There must be a range of options. So I would agree with the left-hand side here.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

To the extent that they are needed for flexible response, the size and variety of nuclear arsenals stabilizes deterrence. But at the moment they are clearly unnecessarily large, and should be cut. I would like to see a reduction to a minimum deterrent on both sides.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

I do believe in the theory of balance. That is what mutual nuclear deterrence is based on. But there has been a great deal of propaganda on both sides about who has been ‘ahead’ in the so-called ‘arms race’. A agree with Laurence Martin that there has been loose talk about an ‘arms race’, when all that has been happening has been legitimate modernization in a number of cases.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

I do take the threat of the ‘military-industrial complex’ seriously. There has been a momentum behind a number of undesirable weapons developments, which strict strategic thinking should have kept under tighter control. Many people would say now that MIRVing weapons was a mistake. And the enormous investment in Star Wars technology carries similar dangers. But, overall, there has been more strategic purpose behind the main developments than is suggested on the right-hand side.

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2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) **Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future?**

The fact that both sides have an invulnerable strategic nuclear second-strike force is fundamental for me. So long as second-strike forces are secure, deterrence is stable. We have got that at the moment, and I do not see that anything seriously threatens it. Apart from anything else, submarines are virtually invulnerable, and are likely to remain so.

(ii) **Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure?**

But I think that there are real worries in this area. Too much attention has been paid to a comparison between force structures, and not enough to what I would call 'crisis management'. We must take much more care to ensure that wars do not break out by accident, or by a misreading of signals and so on, and to make provision for bringing hostilities to an end as rapidly as possible should deterrence fail. I do not have the impression that at the moment command, control, communications and intelligence facilities are adequate in these respects.

(iii) **If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end hostilities swiftly?**

If deterrence failed, the risk of escalation would, of course, be great. It must be taken with the utmost seriousness. But I would reject the idea on the right-hand side that escalation would be automatic. There is an alternative scenario. We must hope that leaders on both sides would act in the common interest and prevent it. It is dangerous for people to think that there are only two alternatives: successful deterrence or all-out nuclear war.

(iv) **Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence?**

It depends which system we are talking about here. In this country the fuss has mainly been about Cruise, but it seems to me that it is Pershing II which is seen by the Soviet Union to pose the serious first-strike threat. The missiles are so accurate and the flight-time is so short that this must make the other side nervous and tempt them to act first. So it would have been better had Pershing II not been deployed.
The Reverend Richard Harries

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons?

I do not favour the Strategic Defence Initiative. First of all it will not work. But in itself it is also destabilizing. The side that thought that it was behind on strategic defence would have to develop enormous numbers of offensive weapons in order to penetrate the system. This could lead to another round of the arms race. The impetus behind Strategic Defence is destabilizing.

(vi) Is the threat of ‘horizontal’ nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies?

Here again there is a perfectly proper and serious worry. But proliferation has been much slower than people at one time predicted. The fact that so many countries that could have developed nuclear weapons have not done so, shows that it is generally recognized that they only have a very limited usefulness. Although major arms reductions by the superpowers would reinforce the will not to develop systems in other countries, I think that this is marginal. The power of example on the international stage is only limited.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability?

First of all, I am a supporter of arms control, even if the achievements are limited. It does help to keep the balance stable. But I would distinguish arms control from arms reduction, and, in the wake of Reykjavik, I think that we can now look for real reductions, not just control.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely?

Here I agree with the left-hand side.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war?

It is a mistake to become so obsessed with the idea of eliminating nuclear weapons that we forgot how terrible a conventional war would be. The reason for keeping nuclear weapons is to prevent all war between the major powers.
(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out?

I agree with the left-hand side.

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility?

So long as there is a danger of war, we need nuclear weapons. I would have welcomed an agreement of the kind proposed at Reykjavik, in which minimum forces were kept on both sides as a continuing deterrent. And, in order to make extended deterrence effective, a wide range of targeting possibilities is needed. I do not myself believe that it must include tactical nuclear weapons, nor indeed land-based INF weapons — although others disagree. But we must never get to the stage where people can think that it would be in their interest to go to war.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely?

I agree with historians like Michael Howard who say that the 1914–18 War was not just caused by an arms race. Other factors were much more crucial. And today what matters is mutual recognition of proper spheres of influence, and stable alliances. The comparison with the years before 1914 is a false one.

B NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe?

The Soviet Union does enjoy conventional military superiority at the moment, although I believe that it is not as great a superiority as a number of people think. I also believe that modern precision-guided weaponry could redress the balance still further. I am not an expert on all this, but that would be my reading of it.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power which will take advantage of unilateral Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control agreements by Western determination and strength?

All medium-to-large powers are potentially expansionist. This need not be
because they are particularly malevolent, but because they feel vulnerable and want to keep their borders secure. In order to do this, they are as likely as not to be inching those borders out. This is especially the case with the Soviet Union, which has long and often ill-defined frontiers, and feels that it needs buffer states to be secure. It is determined that past history should not repeat itself. It also still officially subscribes to Marxist-Leninist ideology, which is indeed expansionist, but this has been tempered over the years, so that now the Soviet Union is a rather conservative and cautious power.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? OR Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

In view of Soviet non-nuclear strength, it is right that for the time being NATO keeps open the early use of nuclear weapons as a possibility. It may be true that the weapons could not in fact be used – apart from anything else, the Soviet Union lets it be known that there could be no limited use, and that early use by the West would bring massive retaliation. But the threat of that use is important in order to underpin deterrence. It is a stalemate. And NATO’s nuclear weapons help to keep it that way.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing? OR Does the West initiate nearly all phases of the nuclear arms race and continue to enjoy a substantial lead in most areas? Is the nuclear ‘overkill’ such that the West could offer a nuclear ‘freeze’ or unconditional cuts without risk?

I do not think that deterrence is ‘delicate’, in the sense that each side has to match the other side’s nuclear forces in detail. All that is needed is the generally recognized ability to inflict unacceptable damage if attacked first. Deterrence is robust enough to allow the West to make unconditional reductions in some areas without risk.

(v) Are NATO ‘forward defence’ and ‘deep strike’ strategies essential for effective deterrence? OR Should NATO exploit her lead in ‘emerging technology’ to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

I am very much in favour of the development of Emerging Technology in order to scale down the relative advantage enjoyed by the Soviet Union in non-nuclear force strength, and to enable NATO to reduce reliance on the likely early use of nuclear weapons. But I do not see it as an alternative to FoFA (Follow-on Forces Attack). The two go together. FoFA needs to be argued on its own merits, as the most effective defensive strategy, or not, as the case may be.
(vi) **Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security?**

Should American policies therefore be supported?

I agree with what is written on the left-hand side. Obviously there will eventually come a time when these American troops are no longer stationed in Europe. But that probably lies many decades ahead, when the world will be very different to what it is now. A rapid decoupling at the present stage would be very destabilizing.

(vii) **Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?**

Well, as I say, I think that there are certain steps that can be taken unilaterally by either side without fundamentally destabilizing the system. But what is needed is overall bilateral or multilateral agreement, such as seemed to be within reach at Reykjavik. As it is, I just reaffirm my view that deterrence is fundamentally stable. Many of those in the Peace Movement play on people's fears that it is unstable. I think that this is quite untrue.

C **British Policy**

1 **The British Deterrent**

(i) **Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?**

I agree with those who say that, if Britain did not already have an independent deterrent, she would not now be acquiring one. But, in a world of notorious uncertainty, where we do not know what power configurations there may be in future, since we already have a deterrent, I think that on balance we should keep it. But I do not feel nearly as strongly about this as I do about the importance of nuclear deterrence as a whole, and about Britain's role in supporting it.
Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making?

Is the 'second centre of decision making' an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

This seems to me to be one of the main reasons for Britain to retain a nuclear capability. If the Americans did begin to pull out of Europe, Europe would need to have an independent deterrent to which Britain would need to contribute.

Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it?

Are US forces committed anyway and independent? Are US forces committed anyway and independent? Are British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

There is also something in this – that the Americans welcome shared responsibility, and fear that British nuclear disarmament would be part of a general weakening of commitment to defence.

Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive?

Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

Here I would agree with the left-hand side.

Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendency in Europe?

Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

I would not lay very much stress on this. I do not really think that Britain's possession of independent nuclear forces significantly increases her influence, even with the Americans.

Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century?

Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

I am not a conservative, but I would support Trident on the grounds that, if we are to retain an independent deterrent, then it should be the best available. I have been largely persuaded of this by Neil Cameron, the former principal of King's College, who was a keen advocate of Trident.
2 NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) **Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends?**
Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance?

I am entirely in agreement with what is written on the left-hand side.

(ii) **Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?**

Here I would certainly say that, if we are to have a nuclear deterrent system, largely operated by the Americans, then we must support them. Not to do so would undoubtedly seriously weaken NATO. As I say, I feel more strongly about this than I do about the need for an independent British force. I do not think that the existence of American nuclear bases in this country significantly erodes our sovereignty.

(iii) **Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally?**

Given our geographical position and importance within the Western Alliance, there is no prospect of our being able to turn ourselves into a nuclear-free sanctuary.

(iv) **Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella?**

It means nothing to say that we do not want to shelter under the American umbrella. The umbrella is there and it continues to protect us. We are sheltering under it, and therefore we should help to hold the handle.

Moral Considerations

(i) **Is it morally right to pursue the policy least likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong?**

My own view is that there are certain actions which are morally wrong under
all conceivable circumstances. For example, it can never be right to launch a deliberate and direct attack against millions of non-combatants. But in public life the choices that face us are not usually as clear-cut as this. We normally have to decide between evils. If we are fighting a war, whatever we do will result in the loss of civilian life. Even an attack on purely military targets will cause some civilian deaths. So, in these circumstances, other things being equal, it must be morally right to pursue the policy which we think will cause least human suffering. The important distinction here is between directly intending non-combatant casualties, and acting in such a way that non-combatant casualties are an unintended (but foreseen) consequence of our action. The former is morally illegitimate; the latter may be morally allowed, if it really is the lesser of two evils.

(ii) In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies? OR Is the only relevant point here that a nuclear exchange of almost any kind would in itself cause unimaginable suffering to largely civilian populations?

When we turn to the question of nuclear weapons, the same applies. If the statement on the right were true, if the only use of nuclear weapons was a general exchange in which hundreds of millions died, then this could never be morally justified. But this is not the only scenario that we can envisage. Although the use of any nuclear weapon would almost certainly cause terrible collateral suffering, and would also carry the risk of escalation, there can well be a restricted employment of nuclear weapons against military targets, which would not cause more overall damage than conventional weapons in the war taken as a whole. So the statement on the right-hand side is misleading.

Given the caveat against directly attacking non-combatant populations already made, I tend to agree with the statement on the left. Particularly important here is the point about the probability of success. Again, if I did not think that nuclear deterrence is fundamentally stable, I might take a very different view. But, as things are, I think that it is stable, so it is unlikely that nuclear or conventional weapons will be used by the great powers against one another at all. Insofar as that is so, the question of relative costs does not arise.

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use? OR Is there no such thing as a fully deployed weapons system which is a bluff? Is to deploy nuclear weapons to intend to use them in certain circumstances?

But here I agree with the statement on the right. Although it is true that our overall purpose or intention is to make sure that these weapons are never used, in order that this might be so we have to deploy them, and to retain the option of using them. The targeting policy necessary to make deterrence effective is not a bluff. Nor will it do to suggest, as does Anthony Kenny, for example, that we could deploy our nuclear weapons, but publicly declare that we will
never use them. This would put servicemen into an impossible situation. They
are trained to use these weapons, and have to assume that they might be called
upon to fire them. If they were at the same time told that there were no
circumstances in which it would be moral to do so, their position would
become untenable. The statement on the left-hand side is correct so far as
concerns our overall intention, but, as pointed out on the right, we must also
face the moral implications of the fact that deterrence involves a conditional
intention to use our weapons should it fail.

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons
which are allowed by Just War theory, for
example the bombing of Hiroshima and
Nagasaki in order to prevent worse
suffering? Can there be a theory of Just
Deterrence?

To sum up, two considerations in particular lead me to think that there can
be a Theory of Just Deterrence. First, the probability of success seems to be
so high, that it is very unlikely that it will ever come to use in the first place.
But, second, we are nevertheless right to take seriously the question: what if
deterrence were to fail? Here it is important that there are possible morally
justifiable uses of nuclear weapons, the threat of which is sufficient to make
deterrence effective. These two, largely non-moral considerations — the prob-
ability of success and the possibility of restricted use — underlie my conclusion.
If I thought that either or both were not true, then I might well conclude that
it is immoral to deploy nuclear weapons. To that extent, although the moral
principles themselves are not affected, particular moral judgements are depen-
dent upon prudential considerations.

The question of whether the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima
and Nagasaki was morally justified depends upon whether they were seen as
military targets. A case can be made out on grounds of proportionality, if, as
Leonard Cheshire argues, the alternative was an invasion of Japan with the
likelihood of over twelve million deaths. But, on grounds of discrimination,
it depends upon whether a direct attack was made on non-combatants. So far
as I understand it, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not intended as military
targets, but the aim was to deliver as great a psychological shock as possible
to the Japanese war leaders. In that case, these actions cannot be encompassed
within Just War theory, and must be judged to have been immoral.

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the
development and deployment of nuclear
weapons and world poverty and disease?

In terms of the world in which we live, I do not accept the connection made
on the right-hand side. It is not only, or even mainly, nuclear weapons which
tie up all these resources. Nor is it an 'either/or'. If nuclear weapons prevent world war, then the poor will suffer along with the rich if we get rid of them.

But, judged by the absolute standards of the Kingdom of God, it certainly is a scandal. It is part of the whole scandal of human existence. Although in worldly terms it is essential for even the most underdeveloped societies to maintain armed forces, and they would suffer if they did not, in heavenly terms it is quite wrong. Nuclear weapons carry the same ambivalence, as do so many other features of our life on earth.

(vi) Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons? Or Does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?

For the reasons already given, Christian teaching does allow the continued development and deployment of nuclear weapons. It allows this in the same way that it allows many other things necessary for the right ordering of our society. We live in a fallen world, and, in those circumstances, the churches have always taught that force or constraint are needed to protect the innocent from the criminal elements within society, and malevolent enemies without. The whole of society depends to a greater or lesser measure on the use of constraint, and it’s just illusion to pretend that it does not. Indeed, Christian authorities have a positive duty to perform these functions, and proper defence against external enemies is one of them. But they must be performed in a spirit of Christian love. We must never lose sight of the deeper purpose behind our actions. This has always been central to the Christian tradition of the Just War.

But, of course, in the Augustinian City of God, none of these things would be so.

Recommendations

1 No. This is a meaningless concept.
2 Yes (See A2(A)(v)).
3 I know the arguments against a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, but I would support it, at any rate for a period, as an important sign of sincerity. I am, in fact, more worried about French tests in the Pacific than I am about the underground tests.
4 No (See B(iii)).
5 Yes (See A1(iv) & A2(A)(vii)).
6 They do not mean much.
7 Yes (See A2(A)(vi))
8 No (See A2(B)).
9 Yes (See A1(iv) & B(iv)).
10 Yes.
11 No (See B(iii)).
12 Not a unilateral freeze. There is room for cutting down dual-capable,
battlefield and land-based INF systems, but not right down unless the Soviets reciprocate (See B(iv)).

13 No.
14 No.
15 No. See 6.
16 No (See C1).
17 Does not apply.
18 No (See C2(i)).
19 No (See C2(i) & C2(ii)).
20 Does not apply.
Biographical Note

Sir Michael Howard is Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford. Born in 1922, he served with the British Army in Italy between 1943 and 1945 and was awarded the Military Cross. He was Professor of War Studies at London University between 1963 and 1968, Fellow in Higher

Sir Michael was for many years Vice-Chairman of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, and is Vice-President of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, on whose Council he has served since its foundation in 1958. He is also a Vice-President of the Royal United Services Institute, the Historical Association, and the Council on Christian Approaches to Defence and Disarmament. He is a member of the Foreign Secretary’s Advisory Panel on Disarmament and Arms Control.

Among his many books and articles, special mention may be made of War in European History (1976), and The Causes of Wars (1983).

Editorial Comment

These answers were communicated in Sir Michael’s rooms in Oriel College, Oxford, on May 28 and November 10, 1986. Apart from the careful moral justification of continued nuclear weapon deployment at the end, perhaps of special interest here is Sir Michael’s refusal, as an historian, to accept either of the analogies offered in question A2(B)(v); his defence of the principles behind current NATO strategy, but criticism of the unnecessary degree of dependence upon the likely early use of nuclear weapons, in the answers to questions B(i), B(iii) and B(v); and his review of policy options for Britain and recommendation of ‘burden-sharing’ in the answer to question C2(iv). The answer to question A2(B)(iv) offers a cautiously optimistic assessment of the direction in which we seem to be heading.

SIR MICHAEL HOWARD

A Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945? OR Has it mainly been other factors?

I would say that nuclear deterrence has been one factor among many, and that it is impossible to give it weight as against the other factors.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war? OR Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?

I would say that it is a powerful disincentive to anybody initiating a war, either conventional or nuclear. It does pose a terrifying risk, which, so far, no major power has been inclined to take. I don’t think that it lacks credibility – if it
did, then it is probable that by this time somebody would have started a major war, which they have not. The question of whether it invites sub-deterrent encroachment is really a different question altogether. Indeed, if it has credibility, then it is likely to do so.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war?  OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has ‘flexible response’ dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

I think that one has to answer this in terms of different time-frames. Initially, Western military planners assumed war-fighting superiority, and deployed theatre nuclear weapons on that assumption. With the creation of nuclear parity at theatre level, the original assumptions cease to be valid, and the question then does arise as to how far the purposes for which they were originally deployed still apply. What they are now meant to do is to make it clear that a war, which begins conventionally, might well end in a nuclear fashion, and thereby increase the deterrent to conventional attack. In my view they still do that. The fact that there is now parity of nuclear weapons at every level does not, in itself, erode the credibility of a nuclear response.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence?  OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

Well, frankly, I think that both are true. I think that to some extent a spectrum of nuclear weapons does stabilize deterrence, but I think that, nonetheless, the worst-case analysis and the logic of the thing have created a ludicrous superfluity of weapons systems. One could undertake a rigorous degree of pruning, without destabilizing the situation.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it?  OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

The alternate answer on the right contains so many issues, which are not necessarily directly related to one another, that it is very difficult to give a succinct response to it. I think that the whole concept of balance is an illusory one. It is the wrong concept to have in mind. The concept that one has to think about is stability. And stability is not provided by equivalent numbers of weapons, which is what ‘balance’ suggests. It is provided by the assurance that, however many weapons the other side has, one is still going to be able effectively to deter him from their use by the credibility of one’s own nuclear response. And that is not a function of the number of weapons which one has. I think that it is an illusion on the part of hard-line strategists, as well as arms-
controllers and disarmers, to think that there is such a relationship. I think that the concept of each power being able to preserve an effective nuclear response is essential to stability. I wouldn't say that arms control negotiations have helped to achieve it. But, insofar as arms control negotiations do aim at ensuring that stability, they are not utterly fruitless.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

Much more the latter than the former. Strategic thinking has not been completely irrelevant to force planning. But I do think that bureaucratic interests and inertia have, as historically they always have, played a far larger part in determining what force structures will be. All too often strategic justification is devised post hoc — or simply produced out of files in order to justify something which has been decided upon for other reasons.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

When someone says that something is inconceivable, he is talking about our capacity to conceive things, not about the subject under discussion. What we are talking about here is the degree of probability. In my view, the threat of an enemy first strike remains highly improbable. It has to be admitted that the greater accuracy of new weapons-systems may marginally increase the probability, by placing the survivability of land-based missiles that much more in doubt. This does, unfortunately, mean that there is likely to be more safety in redundancy than in reduction — which I wish was not the case. But, even so, the probability of the Soviet Union's being able effectively to eliminate the whole of the American land-based nuclear retaliatory force is so remote, that I really think that it's foolish to postulate it as a basis for planning. And, in addition, so long as the sea-launch ballistic missiles are there, they will still constitute an extremely effective second-strike force and a credible deterrent.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? OR Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

Here, on the other hand, I would plump for the latter answer without any hesitation at all. Everything that I have read confirms my worries about the capacity of either side to be able to function effectively in these respects under crisis.
If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end limited once it had broken out a dangerous illusion?

I think that this is an unanswerable question. In a sense, the whole concept of flexible response does assume the possibility of a limited nuclear exchange. And this cannot be dismissed as impossible. But the whole thing is a question of unassessable probabilities.

Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence?

I don't think that the deployment of recent theatre nuclear systems has made much difference. It has neither enhanced, nor eroded deterrence. There were ample resources for immediate retaliation anyway, quite sufficient to deter the Soviet Union from using her SS2Os in a nuclear first strike against NATO command and control systems. What is far more significant than this, although rarely stressed, is a capacity for an effective first strike with purely conventional warheads. That would, indeed, made conventional defence that much more difficult.

Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons?

The Strategic Defence Initiative means one of two things. It either means the maximalist objective, as outlined by President Reagan, of rendering nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete, by making it impossible for them to get through; or the minimalist objective, which is for developing more effective point-defence systems for retaliatory forces. Insofar as it does the latter, I don't think that it is necessarily destabilizing, because it probably provides a rather necessary technological counter to the increasing penetrability and accuracy of missiles. Insofar as it promises to do the former, however, aiming at an absolutely secure blanket defence, then I'm afraid that I think that it would be destabilizing. In fact, nothing that I have seen indicates to me that this is likely to be achieved. But what is worrying is the way in which the President and the Administration of the United States seem to think that it is achievable. This in itself is highly destabilizing.

Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies?

'Horizontal' and 'vertical' proliferation are linked, but not in the way that is generally understood. I don't subscribe to the 'Swedish' doctrine, that the example of the great powers affects what the potential nuclear powers decide to do. The latter will determine their policy in accordance with what they
perceive their neighbours and rivals doing within their own regional sub-systems. They will calculate the cost-benefit of diverting the very considerable resources necessary for developing any kind of credible nuclear system away from the other things they may want to do. Where there is a link is in the technical development of nuclear weapons, which occurs as an inevitable result of the armament process engaged in by the great powers. But I don’t have the technological knowledge to know whether this is likely to make the development of nuclear weapons easier and cheaper. If it does, then that will in itself make ‘horizontal’ proliferation more likely.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is ‘arms-control’ an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

I am not particularly optimistic about current arms control talks achieving anything more than a stabilization of the status quo. But I do not see that there is a better alternative. I do not distinguish between arms control and nuclear disarmament, as suggested on the right. I have yet to be convinced that unilateral disarmament initiatives would be any way of ‘breaking the log-jam’. Like democracy, arms control is the worst system – except for all the others!

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely? OR Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?

Major war did not first become a possibility when nuclear weapons were invented, and therefore the suggestion that the abolition of nuclear weapons would eliminate the causes of war is, if I may say so, a very irrational and ignorant one. So conventional war would then again become an option.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war? OR Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?

I think that the answer is that a major conventional war would be less terrible than a limited nuclear war, but would lead to the possibility of a nuclear war nonetheless. You would get the worst of both worlds.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out? OR As with nerve gases in the last war, would there be no incentive to resort to capabilities which the other side has as well?

Although you may have abolished your nuclear weapons, you have not abolished your capacity to make them, so, once conventional war has broken out, both sides are likely to race in order to produce them. The abolition of nuclear weapons would in this way only lead to their reintroduction.
By a ‘rational world order’ some people mean a kind of world government in which war has simply become civil war. But we are likely to go on with a framework of nation-states for the foreseeable future. This means, I’m afraid, a framework of armaments. No doubt this is very inadequate as a way of ordering the world, but there is reason to believe that we are going to be able to go on incrementally improving it. I think that we are. In the end, I would optimistically and ideally see an incremental change-over from a system which depends upon national armaments, to one which relies on mutual agreement. Armaments would become purely symbolic – rather like the palace guard. But, in the meantime, during the whole of this (presumably long) process, it will be necessary to maintain nuclear deterrent forces.

I’m not happy with either of these analogies. It’s totally illusory to do what A. J. P. Taylor does, and say that the great armaments before 1914 were seen as deterrents, and they failed. They weren’t seen as deterrents. They were seen as means of fighting a war to which many people looked forward, and which many people thought that they could win. The view that 1914 was simply a terrible accident is one which I, and a great many other historians, simply do not believe in at all. The analogy falls down.

And the same is true of the 1939 analogy, I think. That happened, basically, because Hitler saw conventional war as an effective instrument of policy, which was going to enable him to gain his objectives at minimal cost. He miscalculated. The great thing about the existence of nuclear weapons is that it is very unlikely that anybody is going to believe that war is an effective instrument of policy in the same kind of way.

B NATO Policy

Well, the way I would put it is that I would far rather be commanding the Soviet armed forces than commanding NATO armed forces. It’s not so much a question of trading tank against tank, or aircraft against aircraft. To do a bean-count in this way is to overlook what is far more important – the structural weaknesses in NATO. It is the fact that the Soviet armed forces are
under one single command, speak one single language, and conform to one
single strategy, that is significant. And it’s the sheer lack of coordination of
NATO forces, the different degrees of training, the failures of communication
between them, which worry me in the event of a war. All of this could be
improved dramatically without any substantial increase in the actual number
of armaments.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power OR Is the Soviet Union an encircled and
which will take advantage of unilateral, threatened power trying to keep up with
Western concessions and is only restrained Western technology and likely to respond
and forced to accept arms-control positively to unconditional offers of
agreements by Western determination and Western restraint within a general context
strength?

I think that it is true that the Soviet Union is essentially a defensively-oriented
power. It certainly does see itself threatened by Western technology, and by
Western ideology. Even if the technological conflict and the conflict over
Eastern Europe were eroded, there will still remain a fundamental ideological
hostility and lack of understanding, which is going to keep the Soviet Union
profoundly suspicious.

But the Soviet Union sees its best security in extending its perimeter when
it can. It is not a naive power, and is quite capable of exploiting naivety in the
West. It will exploit divisions between allies, and weaken us in every way that
it possibly can. So, should we make unconditional offers? Should we allow
ourselves to be weakened? Will it in fact lead to a greater degree of mutual
understanding? I’m afraid that I still believe that it’s better to try to preserve
coherence and firmness in the Western Alliance, when dealing with the Soviet
Union.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional OR Is NATO dependence on the early use
preponderance such that NATO must nuclear weapons unnecessary and
continue to be able to threaten early use of strategically suicidal?
nuclear weapons?

I believe that we should have a force structure that enables us to fight success-
fully with conventional weapons for the longest possible time, and in this way
delay the introduction of nuclear weapons to the last possible moment. The
Soviet Union needs to perceive that, even if we don’t use our nuclear weapons,
she will still suffer very heavy losses. But to abandon the possibility of the use
of nuclear weapons is virtually to hand the game to the Soviet union, who
might then be prepared to accept heavy conventional losses in the belief that
she would eventually prevail. So I would wish to retain the nuclear option in
Western strategy, but to make it an option for late use, rather than for early
use.

It is true that, if it ever came to a major theatre nuclear exchange, then –
finitis Europa, East and West. So the use of nuclear weapons would be intended
only to show that one had reached a point of such despair, that one was
prepared to gamble on the possibility of a limited nuclear war, rather than admit total defeat. It is not a decision that I would wish to have to take.

Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing?

I think that the balance is not delicate at all. I also think that it's true that the West initiates nearly all phases of the nuclear arms race. On the other hand, the Soviet Union is very good at catching up and overhauling us, and I do not think that it's true that the West 'enjoys a substantial lead in most areas'. In those areas in which we do enjoy a lead the Soviet Union is hot on our heels.

The problem with a 'freeze' is choosing the moment when you can have a freeze, when neither side feels that it is at a disadvantage. So far nobody has found the precise point to do that.

As for 'unconditional cuts', we come up against the problem of what might be called the 'arms control game', in which there are protests that we should not give anything away without a quid pro quo. This is an argument that I simply don't buy. If you don't need the weapons, why have them? We are beginning, very reluctantly, to say that we have got far more theatre nuclear weapons than we need - and have, in fact, unconditionally abolished 2000 of the 6000 or so that we had.

NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence? Should NATO exploit her lead in 'emerging technology' to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

There are two points to be made here. The first is that, if we stand purely on the defensive, the war will be fought on our territory - or, rather, West Germany territory. The second is rather more axiomatic. As Clausewitz has said, all defence must involve the concept of some kind of counter-strike. Just to sit there and allow oneself to be subjected to enemy blows is not defence at all. I have yet to see a convincing 'alternative strategy', which would hold out the prospect of eventually being able to destroy the weight of attack, which Soviet forces can bring against us - including their command of the air. Relatively untrained reservists, manning local point-defences, for example, simply would not be able to stand up to the sustained intensity of Soviet pressure. And the idea that 'emerging technology' will necessarily favour defence over attack is illusory.

So the military concept that the way to stop a Soviet attack is to absorb as much of it as you can in your front line, and then launch attacks against their lines of communication to prevent the follow-on forces from coming on, seems to me to be sound strategy and sound deterrence. Nor does it seem to me to be particularly provocative. So I don't have a problem about that.
(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported?

OR Is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

About this I say two things. First, neutrality. It takes three to make a neutral. To declare that you are neutral or nuclear-free means nothing, unless the two belligerents are prepared to agree that you are. Neutrality is the privilege of certain geographically favoured areas. But an area like Western Europe, which is on the direct line between the two main belligerents, cannot possibly be regarded as neutral by them if the balloon were to go up. In these circumstances, the Soviet Union would either occupy Western Europe, or demand such guarantees as virtually to erode our sovereignty. And we could not prevent the use of nuclear weapons against us, or the seizure of parts of our territory as bases for nuclear weapons.

Secondly, I think that the idea that there can be a safe ‘no-man’s land’ of this kind would in any case be a recipe for disaster. A large ‘neutral’ zone would be a constant prey for subversion by both sides, as each tried to support those within the area who they thought were inclined in their direction. There would be the perpetual danger of conflict and instability within every European country. It is the clarity of the distinction of the frontier, where there can be no doubt whatever where the border lies, that is the best security for peace in Europe and for peace in the world.

The presence of American front-line troops, and the tying-in of Western defences to the American strategic nuclear deterrent, are fundamental in making it quite clear to the Soviet Union that their frontier stops at the Iron Curtain, and that there is a powerful alliance, which is going to make any use of military force as a means of attaining political objectives highly counterproductive.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

OR Are unilateral initiatives as part of a general programme of nuclear disarmament the only way to reverse the arms race? Is talk of ‘multilateral disarmament’ insincere in the mouths of those who reject all suggestion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a Nuclear Freeze, a European Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, or a declaration of No First Use?

In response to the questions on the left, I do not myself believe that radical nuclear disarmers consciously serve Soviet interest. But the divisiveness of their proposals, sincere as they are, does provide for a kind of incoherence in Western policy, which the Soviet Union naturally exploits. That is, I’m afraid, what happens in pluralistic democracies, and one has got to put up with it.

Turning to the questions on the right, I agree that, when Gorbachev or
Reagan say that their aim is to abolish nuclear weapons, they are being insincere. Both, fundamentally, wish to preserve their nuclear deterrents. And it’s high time they came out and said so. It’s also true that, if the United States were prepared to make certain unilateral initiatives, of a kind that could generally be seen not to erode her own security, but might be reassuring to the Soviet Union (and I believe that this might be possible), then this would be all to the good. But it is the United States, not Western Europe, which is significant here. And the rejection of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a Nuclear Freeze, a European Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, a Declaration of No First Use, and so on, is made on the perfectly practical grounds that they could be counter-productive.

C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain’s deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail? OR Would all possible uses of Britain’s ‘deterrent’ be suicidal? Is its only effect to encourage proliferation?

Within the context of a conflict with the Soviet Union, in which we were not members of an alliance, I cannot see our deterrent being credible. But in the world as it may develop in the 21st century, the Soviet Union may not be the only nuclear power with which we may be in conflict. I do find the argument, that, if the Argentines had had nuclear weapons, we might have had major problems in the recent war, quite persuasive. For that reason I think that there is a lot to be said for remaining in the nuclear game without necessarily thinking of maintaining credibility against the Soviet Union.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making? OR Is the ‘second centre of decision making’ an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

In the past the ‘second centre of decision-making’ argument has not been very convincing, and our European allies, and in particular the West Germans, have not been enthusiastic about our possession of our nuclear weapons. But, as there comes to be increasing fear of decoupling from the United States, then the value of there being nuclear decision-makers on this side of the Atlantic does, I think, become more apparent to our continental allies. I also think that it is arguable that one does not so much need a second centre for decision-making if the United States is the first centre, but that, if the alternative is for Paris to be the only centre, then many of us would feel safer if there were another one as well.
(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? OR Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

I do think that the United States forces are committed anyway. The reason why they are prepared to help us to produce Trident is not because they think that this will in itself significantly strengthen the Western alliance, but because they fear that our giving up of our independent nuclear forces would be seen to be a weakening of our will to defend ourselves and our allies. But, in general, their defence decision-makers regard the British independent deterrent as more of an embarrassment than anything else.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? OR Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

All I would say here is that nuclear weapons are still very cheap compared with conventional forces.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

The idea that British unilateral nuclear disarmament would have any effect on other powers seems to me to be a sort of colonialist attitude – an assumption that Britain still provides moral leadership in the world. I do not believe that the Indians, or the Israelis, or the Pakistanis, or any of the other near nuclear powers, would be in the least interested in what Britain does or does not do.

What I think that it would do would be to weaken British influence on decision-makers in the United States. Unless it was accompanied by a really spectacular increase in our conventional capabilities, it would simply be taken as evidence that our will to defend ourselves was being eroded.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? OR Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

I don't agree with the implication behind the question on the right. I don't think that commitment to Trident makes any difference in those respects. But nor do I accept that it is the only or best way to continue to ensure effective strategic defence. A capacity to explode a very small number of warheads on Soviet soil is a very effective deterrent, as the recent events at Chernobyl indicate. It is certainly not necessary for us to be able to penetrate the defences of Moscow and destroy Soviet headquarters, or to eliminate sixty Soviet cities. This is grotesque overkill. Arguments in favour of Trident along these lines are not valid.
2 NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance?

I think that, if we accept the overall NATO strategy, then we have got an obligation to do whatever is considered necessary within the alliance to play our part in upholding it. There are understandable reasons why neither Norway nor Denmark wish to have nuclear weapons on their soil, because they are part of a sort of Baltic balance, whose nuances have got to be taken into account. We have no excuses of that kind. Either we are full members of the Alliance, playing a full part in it by whatever is regarded as effective burden-sharing, or we are not. I really don't see a sort of half-way house.

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?

The withdrawal of US bases from Britain would, clearly, not make the defence of the West impossible. But they are there for a strategic purpose, and their removal would therefore create difficulties. What it would do, it seems to me, is unnecessarily to create major complications within the Western Alliance, and to that extent destabilize what I think is still a relatively stable relationship between the East and the West. The presence of these bases on our soil is to some extent an erosion of sovereignty, but it is arguable that this is a price which one has to pay for being part of any larger kind of community, whether it is the EEC or NATO or anything else.

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally?

In a conflict between the Alliance, as it is at present, and the Soviet Union, there are a large number of legitimate military targets for the Soviet Union in Britain, apart from any nuclear bases and facilities - for example, places like Portsmouth, or Harwich, from which our reinforcements could sail or on which our Fleet is based. If we tried to remove ourselves from the Alliance, or to declare some sort of neutrality, then both the United States and the Soviet Union might feel that they would have to occupy us or deny occupation to the other.

So I see no safety whatever in trying to subtract ourselves from the equation.
Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US 'umbrella' than any other Western ally — or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

There are a number of different possibilities here. We have already rejected the possibility of a totally non-nuclear and neutral Europe. Then there is the possibility that Britain could opt out of the alliance, irrespective of what else is done in Europe. Britain would lose all capacity to influence the policy of those still in the Alliance, the Alliance would be severely weakened, and this would be likely to produce a very much more unstable situation than the one we have at present.

A third possibility we have also already dealt with — that we remain a member of the Alliance, but tell the United States to remove their nuclear bases from our soil. So we are left with a fourth possibility, which in many ways I favour. It is one of burden-sharing, in which we leave strategic nuclear forces to the United States, and ourselves concentrate on non-nuclear forces on a simple cost-effective bases. We would continue to provide nuclear facilities for the United States and to be members of an alliance, whose strategy is based fundamentally on American strategic nuclear retaliatory capability.

Moral Considerations

(i) Is it morally right to pursue the policy least likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong? OR Are there actions which are in themselves wrong no matter what the situation? Is the alternative to excuse almost any act of barbarism?

I think that there is a false apposition in the statement on the right. An action is 'in itself' morally neutral. What makes it moral or immoral is motive and consequence. The infliction of pain as an act of sadism is morally wrong; the same action carried out as a judicious punishment is not morally wrong, and may be morally desirable. Then there are notorious grey areas. Is it morally wrong to inflict pain in order to eliminate injustice? This will depend upon the circumstances. If you have an IRA prisoner, and know that he has set a time-bomb to go off in Oxford Street, is it not right to inflict great pain on him in order to find out where it is before it is too late? But in these cases you have to be certain. The more difficult it is to see the moral justification for an action, the more certain you need to be that there is a good moral reason for doing it. You could probably work out some sort of matrix for this. So, in these general terms, I would agree that, if your intention is to maximize human welfare and minimize human suffering, you will sometimes be morally right to do things which in other circumstances would be morally wrong.
In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies?

NOW we apply this to nuclear weapons deployment and use. There are, in fact, two separate, but related, issues here. There is, first of all, the question of whether there are particular limited uses of nuclear weapons that could in certain circumstances be morally justified. Second, there is the question of how great the risk would be that the limited action would escalate towards an all-out nuclear exchange. When the only nuclear weapons were very large and very dirty, the situation was simpler. But now, thanks to the confounded scientists, one does have a very wide range of nuclear weapons, some of which do no more damage than so-called ‘conventional’ weapons. I think that it is very necessary to keep these two issues separated out, because it is all too often said that the use of nuclear weapons is automatically an annihilating strategy. It is not. The statement on the right is incorrect, and, if I may say so, patently incorrect.

So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use?

This is a central issue. As far as I remember, the American Catholic bishops\(^1\) say that it is morally all right to deploy nuclear weapons, as long as you don’t intend to use them. This seems to me to be the weak point in their letter. To deploy nuclear weapons without intending to use them is self-contradictory. You do not develop Polaris submarines and train people to man them, if you know that, when it comes to the point, you are not going to use them. There may be a reasonable doubt as to whether you will. There will always be a chance that you will not. But the effectiveness of deterrence cannot be separated from the possibility that you will use your weapons. Deterrent forces cannot be a bluff. To that extent, the statement on the right is correct. And there is another weakness in the statement on the left. Given NATO strategy at the moment, the function of nuclear weapons is not simply to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by the other side. We do retain the option of first use—unfortunately.

Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence?

The right-hand side has already been dismantled. There are possible uses of

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nuclear weapons, which in certain circumstances could be moral justified in the same way that the use of conventional weapons would be. For example, the destruction of a comparatively isolated military target in, say, the Kola peninsula, which would be likely to pre-empt a Soviet attack and prevent worse damage, while not carrying with it a high risk of escalation. And, if there are possible uses of nuclear weapons which do fit in with the principle of proportionality of Just War theory, then Just Deterrence is possible, too.

As to the question of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there are two issues here. Given the perceptions and the state of knowledge of the time, was it a reasonable, and not immoral, decision to take? And, secondly, with hindsight, knowing what we do now, would we have done the same? Let us set the second question on one side. We now think that it would not have been necessary to invade Japan, because they were in any case on the verge of economic collapse. So for that reason we may say that the dropping of the bombs was unnecessary. But at the time this was not known. It was genuinely thought that, if the bombs were not dropped, the Japanese would go on fighting. Moreover, we must remember the ethics of the period. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by single bombs was surely no more morally reprehensible than the destruction of Tokyo with rather higher casualties by fire-raids carried out by larger numbers of planes. It is the difference between being killed by a single bullet and a shot-gun. The question of radiation after-effects was not thought through as fully as it should have been, although the whole thing is still an open issue. So the question of the morality of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is part of a wider question of the morality of area bombing in general. Would it have been better had Strategic Air Command used fire-bombs to burn every Japanese city, one after the other, with comparable casualties?

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the OR Is it a scandal that such huge resources are development and deployment of nuclear devoted to the development and deployment weapons and world poverty and disease? of nuclear weapons and not to the alleviation of suffering?

If we could be sure that a peaceful order would be preserved without the deployment of nuclear weapons, then we should dismantle them and devote the proceeds to the alleviation of suffering. But I have argued that this is not the case. We must continue with the search for a way of preserving the structure of order at far less cost, but must on no account put that structure at risk in the process. More relevant to this is the question of armaments in general, both the sale of arms to the Third World, and the over-investment by Third World states in military affairs and resources which they ought to be devoting to the welfare of their people and the infrastructure of their economies. If there is any scandal about the failure to relieve suffering, it is about the general self-indulgence of the rich North and West. We could help to relieve suffering by paying rather more income tax, and by drinking and smoking less.
Professor Sir Michael Howard, C.B.E., M.C.

(vi) Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons? OR Does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?

If what I have said is valid, then Christian teaching does not condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons. But it does rather depend upon what you mean by 'Christian teaching'. I find that Roman Catholics tend to see Christian teaching as being an area of discourse which has been going on ever since the time of the early fathers. It is an attempt to define these issues in the light of what we know, or think we know, about God's providence, as applied to the development of humanity and human kind. And there is no single Christian dogma here. Christian teaching provides parameters, a framework, within which one takes decisions. Then there is the Protestant ethic, which does tend to try to draw clear and specific conclusions from Gospel teaching about what we should or should not do. It is Protestents, on the whole, who press for black-and-white judgements. I am more of a Catholic by temperament, and, I suppose, by upbringing. I look to the church for a framework of guidance, within which I and other people can decide what is the best thing to do under the circumstances. Official teaching does not rule out nuclear weapon deployment. It is not happy with it. But there is a great deal in a sinful world about which one is not happy.

Recommendations

1. No (see B(iv)).
2. I favour a moratorium on anti-satellite programmes. A general moratorium of Strategic Defence Programmes would be nice, but, since it would be impossible to monitor and there would be constant reciprocal accusations that it was being breached, I think that this would create far more tensions than it would resolve (see A2(A)(v)).
3. No. I see no point in it. I don't think that it would make the world any safer.
4. No (see B(iii)).
5. I would like to feel that each side would scrutinize its nuclear arsenals and decide what it could dispose of. But cuts do not necessarily produce greater stability, and could produce greater instability (see A1(l), and 9 below).
6. Not in Europe (see B(vi)).
7. It would be nice if those powers, which have not yet signed, would do so. But tell that to the Indians. I don't see much point in this sort of declaration.
8. No, not in a context where we are still likely to have endemic war (see A2(B)).
9. By definition, a 'sufficient' force would be stable, because each side would decide what was 'sufficient'. I suspect that for this reason it would not do much to change the situation. On the other hand, if nuclear arsenals were reduced to the level where a first strike again began to look like a feasible
possibility, this would produce greater instability. To that extent, a degree of redundancy enhances stability.

10 No. I think that we have done the right thing. We have used our influence with the Americans to persuade them to give a satisfactory definition of what is involved. First, that the objective is to enhance deterrence, not get away from it; second, that this is at present just a research programme in order to keep us abreast of the Soviet Union; third, that there will be careful consultation within the Alliance and with the Soviet Union, if and when the question of deployment is raised. This is a good example of Britain, as a member of the Alliance and a nuclear power, being able to influence policy.

11 No. See 4.
12 No. (See B(iv)).
13 No. (See C1(ii)).
14 No.
15 No. (See B(vi)).
16 No. (See C1).
17 Does not apply.
18 Britain should remain in NATO, but not press for a non-nuclear strategy. Perhaps there could be more cost-effective burden-sharing, in which strategic nuclear defence was left to the United States and we concentrated on strengthening non-nuclear forces (See C2(iv)).
19 No. (See C2(i) & C2(ii)).
20 Does not apply.
Biographical Note

Rebecca Johnson has lived and worked at the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp since August 9, 1982. She has been imprisoned many times for her non-violent resistance to male violence, bases, bunkers, and nuclear war preparations. Prison has increased her determination to use her life working for peace, freedom and justice, with love.
Editorial Comment

This set of answers was recorded at an interview in Marlborough on November 11, 1986. Rebecca Johnson is the only woman whose views are included in this book. For her this is a highly significant fact, as can be seen from the wording of the biographical note, and, above all, from the penultimate paragraph of her response to the Moral Considerations at the end. Equally important, and linked to it, is her rejection of the rational and dispassionate terms within which this issue is usually debated, and her insistence that, both from the point of view of those responsible for the implementation of public policy, and from the point of view of those who may be affected by it, this is a matter that can only be properly responded to in a directly personal and emotional way. In her answers to the questions in section A2(B), and in Moral Considerations, she may be speaking for a considerable number of people not represented elsewhere in this book.

REBECCA JOHNSON

A Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945? OR Has it mainly been other factors?

There has not really been peace between the great powers in the last forty years. They have been trying to increase their spheres of influence and fight out their ideological conflicts by supporting and equipping other groupings. To say that it is nuclear weapons that have kept the peace is as ludicrous to say that it was mustard gas that kept the peace in the years after 1918. We could see the conditions that were leading to the Second World War then, and we can see them now - mutual mistrust, constructed paranoia about the enemy, weapons build-up. The problem is that today we have nuclear weapons, so we cannot allow the naivety that was possible between 1919 and 1939 to prevail now. The Second World War followed from the conflicts unresolved and created at the end of the First World War. If we continue with the naive view of a balance of terror in the world, then the Third World War, the nuclear war, is going to follow on from the military conflicts that we are seeing now.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war? OR Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?

Nuclear deterrence theory is strategically incoherent. Mutual Assured Destruction just displaces the fighting for a time in the way that I have
Rebecca Johnson

described. But the scientists and military strategists are not satisfied with this, and in the 1960s they started to refine nuclear weapons so that they could be used to fight a war. The trouble is that there are all sorts of factors involved in wars. War is not just about military power - it's about political and economic competition. And these tensions and rivalries have not been resolved. So the incentive to war remains, and, the military mind being what it is, strategists could not be satisfied with stasis.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has 'flexible response' dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

The result of this has been the introduction of tactical battlefield nuclear weapons and so on, which have narrowed the gap between conventional and nuclear war, and changed our perceptions, so that now we are planning for limited nuclear war. All of this, of course, increases the likelihood that there will be such a war, and it won't be limited.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

The size and variety of nuclear arsenals is part of the military perception that war can be fought with nuclear weapons. It is also very dangerous, because this vast number of weapons all have to be tested, stored, based, modernized - and this increases the possibility of accidental use or misuse, as well as radioactive pollution and contamination in places like the Pacific, where the Islanders have been victims of our 'Nuclear Peace' for forty years.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of 'nuclear defence' and 'parity' proved illusory and is 'multilateral negotiation from strength' a contradiction in terms? Has 'arms-control' been just another name for the arms race?

The right-hand side is correct. I think that each side does aim for superiority. But, even if the planners in the Pentagon or the Kremlin are aware of exactly what the weapons levels are on each side, it is usually in their interest in terms of domestic political control to put out different stories to their people. If their aim is to build up military arsenals, they say that the other side has more; if their aim is to reassure their own people, they say that their own defences are strong. But I get impatient with having to go through all the arguments about balance and deterrence, when that is not where the important changes have to happen.
I agree with the right-hand side. I think we have seen this very clearly with Star Wars. Reagan is clinging to Star Wars, because he has already sold a number of the contracts for research and development, and because he knows that Republican party votes are going to depend in certain key areas on the industry that is now already gearing up to investment in the programme. It doesn’t matter that the concept of Star Wars is a military nonsense, as long as somebody is making money out of it. With things like Cruise and Pershing, though, it was rather different. The military planners wanted a system that was difficult to detect, could fly below the level of radar, and be launched from various platforms, which Cruise can do; and be swift and accurate, like Pershing. Military planning and industrial enterprise are hand-in-glove. Huge profits are made from keeping us in fear. So much money and power become vested in the arms industry and trade, the spiralling replacement of each new technology and system. It would take a brave government to expose the waste, risk the wrath of the warmongers, and try to rechannel the research and resources into socially useful areas.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

The left-hand side is nonsense. The United States has always refused to give an undertaking of ‘no first use’, and now France has reversed her earlier policy and is wanting to develop a military arsenal which will make first- and second-strike feasible. The dangers are, first, of accidental firing, because wrong signals are sent through the computer, or there is a wrong interpretation of them on the ground. And, second, the new first-strike weapons increase the strain of bluff. In a situation of tension, with both sides jockeying for position, throwing out propaganda both to the other side and to their own public, watching one another, both afraid that the other will strike first and take out command centres and weapons in their silos, in these circumstances the stakes have become very high. All it needs is a failure of nerve in the game of bluff. This is a very real and likely scenario with the weapons now being deployed.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? OR Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

Yes. The right-hand side follows on from this. I just do not think that the
information is secure. I have lived at Greenham for four years, and I have been appalled at how stupid, naive, misinformed, disinformod, and confused these military officers, these people who are supposed to be defending us, really are. Their security is inadequate, it is very easy to get highly sensitive top secret information from them, and some of them do not seem to be able to interpret their own sources of information. I am terrified that peace is in the hands both of fallible communication systems and of badly-educated and ill-informed military personnel.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end limited once it had broken out a dangerous hostilities swiftly? illusion?

I just do not think that we can risk it. My own impression, having seen the way in which the officers in charge of the Cruise convoy panic when faced with a few women standing in the road, is that if there was any kind of exchange it would very quickly escalate. They would try to get all their weapons out as quickly as possible, and probably not even programme them correctly. But any nuclear exchange would be so unimaginably horrifying that we cannot risk it. We have to prevent the possibility.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence?

They lower the threshold. Any honest military strategist will admit that. Their purpose is to take us out of Mutually Assured Destruction, and to make nuclear war thinkable and plannable. Take Cruise. It is supposed to be taken out on dispersal and hidden among the civilian population, and then fired secretly. But we know quite well that Soviet satellites can pick this up, so at a time of tension we will be depending on Soviet military planners to get the equation right and act with restraint. First we are told that the Soviet Union is evil, vicious and untrustworthy; then we place the lives of everyone living within a hundred-mile radius of Greenham at the mercy of the humanity and good sense of Soviet commanders. In April of this year, for example, Cruise went on an unscheduled exercise a few days before the Libyan bombing. In fact, it is stated in the Geneva and Hague Conventions that, just as you should not make civilians the indiscriminate object of your bombing, so you should not hide your weapons systems among the civilian populations. In order to neutralize Cruise, the Soviet Union would have to obliterate a large part of southern Britain. Of course they lower the threshold.

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? or Is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in i?

The Strategic Defence Initiative is very destabilizing. And it’s dishonest. If the scientists, technologists and many of the military are doubtful if it can
work, why are they telling us that it will? They tell us that it will prevent missiles leaving the Soviet Union; that it will be a shield over the United States; Thatcher tries to pretend that it will be a shield over the West as a whole. This is all nonsense. If it were possible to give ninety-five percent protection to, say, Washington or New York, that would just mean that a rational attack would swamp the shield so that even five percent would be enough to annihilate the city. And behind all this is a more sinister implication. Once Congress has been conned into funding all the advanced electronic and laser research, at a certain point the Pentagon may be able to say 'we have done even better. We can now use this technology to control and immobilize whole populations without having to launch a nuclear attack'. And, of course, they will be able to do this to their own domestic population, policing urban unrest brought about by the distortion of the economy and diversion of resources into the whole arms programme and away from education, jobs, social programmes to alleviate poverty, overcrowding and other social evils.

(vi) Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

If nuclear deterrence works, then we should be spreading it to as many countries as possible. Then we would all be safe! But, of course, the superpowers and Britain know that this is nonsense, and that there is no such thing as deterrence. That's why they are all terrified of proliferation. But there is also the desire to keep these weapons in the hands of the rich, predominantly white, north, because this perpetuates their dominance. It is a form of racial superiority.

Proliferation is indeed encouraged by the dependence of the great powers on nuclear deterrence. That is one of the main reasons why Britain should give up her independent deterrent. And she must do it quickly to have an effect. Once some of these other countries have them — tempted by the idea that their possession will bring them power, recognition and respect — it will be too late. We will have a whole other set of problems and instabilities.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is 'arms-control' an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy — nuclear disarmament?

I would agree with the right-hand side. Anyone with a sense of history, looking back at the so-called forty years of multilateral arms control negotiations, has to be blind or stupid to argue that this is an effective way to reduce tension or cut back on arms. Although I welcome any attempt to reduce the vast nuclear arsenals, I am not hopeful about the present talks, because I don't think that this is where the problems lie. It is a mistake to separate defence and arms policies from broader foreign policies. They put all their arguing into haggling over numbers and quantities of explosive power, instead of getting to grips
with the fundamental disagreements and conflicts of ideology, of spheres of influence, of resources.

(b) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

I would like to approach all this in a different way. I do not want to be pushed into the alternatives that the questions in the left-hand column assume. The question that I would like to ask is this: Can the Earth and the nations on it survive a nuclear war of any kind? And my answer would be 'no'. As the Thatcherites are always so keen to tell us, we cannot disinvent nuclear weapons. So war of any kind is no longer a rational option available to anyone. Since we cannot disinvent these weapons of mass destruction, we have to start working out other kinds of policies and means of resolving the problems that war has traditionally been used to resolve — conflicts of belief, territory, resource. In the past, each war has created the next. But with nuclear weapons we cannot afford the next. When wars were fought between small armies and were localized, most of the people who fought and died were soldiers. But in the Second World War forty-five percent of the people who died were civilian, and a lot of those were women and children. It makes me very angry when we have Armistice Day and they lay wreaths at the foot of monuments commemorating the heroic soldiers, and forget that those soldiers were at the same time killing millions of civilians. In any future war that number will be greatly increased.

We can no longer fight wars to protect homes and families. The rational objectives of human life are survival, an increase in the quality and health of life, the creation of a future for our children and grandchildren. In planning for the possibility of war of any kind, we are not making use of the qualities that made human beings fit to survive, our qualities of thought and mind and intelligence. We have to start creating the moral and political structures which will enable our species to survive. War of any kind in a nuclear age will not enable our species to survive. So we have got to discount that as a rational option for all time. We must not allow the evolutionary suicidals to destroy and poison the Earth, the waters, the very air we breathe for all time.

So I have my eyes firmly fixed on the only possibility for the future — although there's a part of me that does not hold out much hope for it, because too many peoply are moral cowards, or are short-sighted and won't make the radical changes that are an urgent necessity.

But my feet are, of course, in the quicksand of the present. Multilateral nuclear disarmament is a little island, a tussock of grass, and conventional disarmament is a tussock a bit further on. We have to take those first very difficult, very sticky, very courageous steps of unilateral nuclear disarmament in order to get ourselves out of the quicksand to the first tussock. That first step of unilateralism could make the programme of multilateral disarmament possible. Then we have to manage our lives and our personal, political and
international relations so as to recognize the pointlessness of all the conventional hardware that clogs the seas and land. That will take time and courage, but, if we hesitate now to reach for the first tussock, the quicksand will suck us deeper down and we will die.

B NATO Policy

The West’s policies threaten our own peace and security, and that of many countries, far more than Soviet activities.

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe?

There’s a huge part of me that doesn’t care too much who thinks they’re superior. It’s all the numbers game. But there probably is a rough parity in conventional forces. As we said before, when it suits their purposes to make us feel that we don’t have as much as the other side, then they argue that way. When they are trying to reassure us, then, almost in the same breath, they argue the other way. Governments are liars. And, in any case, I don’t think that this is where the problem lies.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power or Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?

The present situation has been created out of the aftermath of the Second World War. The twenty-two million deaths that the Soviet Union suffered in that war made her determined to reassure her people that this would never happen again. So Europe was divided up into two ‘spheres of influence’ – Russian and American. To criticize the Soviet Union for going into Hungary or Afghanistan, while ignoring the much greater expansionism of the United States in the same period, is rank hypocrisy. I would tend to agree with the right-hand side here. The Soviet Union is an encircled power, standing at bay, surrounded by forces which are hostile and are putting out increasingly violent rhetoric about how evil the Soviet system is. The West deliberately aims to destabilize the Soviet Union, forcing the diversion of resources away from autonomous national consolidation, and towards military build-up, so that in the end internal discontent boils over. This is the kind of paranoia and projection which has always created the emotional climate for war. It carries with it very great dangers, because, like an animal at bay, an encircled country can attack out of fear. So the essential task is to get rid of these buffer zones and spheres of influence, to emancipate ourselves from virulent propaganda which depicts the other side in dehumanized terms, and finally to break the mould set at the end of the Second World War.
(iii) *Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons?*

Any use of nuclear weapons would be suicidal. So the threat of early use is not credible. The same applies to all modern weapons of mass destruction – biological and chemical, as well as nuclear. (The US claims not to store chemical weapons – but they do in the Welford bomb base, where I have seen the storage facilities.) There cannot be such a thing as ‘deterrence’. NATO’s dependence upon the early use of nuclear weapons is irrational and inexcusably irresponsible. Chemical and biological weapons are as dangerous and uncontrollable as nuclear weapons in that they could get out of hand and spread, to cause death and injury far beyond the battlefield or blinkered intentions of the military users.

(iv) *Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing?*

The right-hand side is probably true. But the very way in which these questions are framed one again brings out the incoherence of the so-called strategy of nuclear deterrence. To invoke the Soviet threat and then say ‘the Soviets are increasing their forces and therefore so must we’ is exactly the fallacy that creates the arms race. It is each side saying this that is carrying us to the precipice. There is such overwhelming overkill that either side could freeze without risk. They won’t, because then they would have to admit the stupidity of this expensive exercise in macho sizing, and also because decades of the arms race means that industry is dependent upon the development of ever-newer weapons-systems with built-in obsolescence and spiralling demand.

(v) *Are NATO ‘forward defence’ and ‘deep strike’ strategies essential for effective deterrence?*

This is entirely irrelevant. The problem is artificial in the first place – the Soviet threat has been created in order to legitimize arms programmes and justify the control of domestic populations in the West – so the search for ‘alternative strategies’ is a diversion from what we should really be concerned with.
(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported?

I am not anti-American. I was brought up there when I was young and I love many things about America and American people. But I would agree that the major threat which faces us, both as a nation, and as members of the human race in general, is the continuing escalation of the superpower confrontation, fuelled principally by United States' sabre-rattling.

And the danger does not just lie in the outbreak of war, but in the steady and surreptitious erosion of democracy that the increasing militarization of Europe is bringing about. It allows governments to implement policies which take away our freedoms – the Public Order Act, the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. This turns legitimate dissent and protest, which is what democracy should be about, into what is described as a treacherous disruption of public life. Health and social service programmes are being dismantled because so many resources are being poured into the bottomless pit of arms-spending. Europe should indeed be a nuclear weapon-free zone, and the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances should be dissolved. Western European countries should contribute towards this by moving towards a policy of non-alignment. True defence in the nuclear age can only lie in the mutual respect and interaction of non-aligned countries.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

This is like the people who say, 'I would love to see the view from the top of that mountain, but I am certainly not going to put one foot in front of the other in order to get there.' Or it's like the twins, who never emerged from the womb, because each was saying 'after you'. I see unilateral initiatives as part of that first crucial step. They certainly don't stand on their own. It would be ludicrous to think that they did. They are the first step in a broader programme. As we have seen, the only alternative is increasing escalation and the baying hounds of the military-industrial complex wanting more and more arms to be built up.

The trouble with the left-hand side is self-fulfilling expectations. If you expect that the Soviet Union will not reciprocate genuinely, then you create the conditions in which they cannot. They have, in fact, taken some significant first steps – making a pledge of no first use, declaring a unilateral test mora-
torium, offering bold initiatives at Reykjavik. But in each case we turn round and say, 'What are they doing that for? I don’t trust them. They must have ulterior motives.' So we have created the conditions in which that whole system of negotiations cannot succeed.

C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain’s deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?

I welcome the Labour Party’s recognition of the fallacy at the heart of Britain’s possession of nuclear weapons. Our ‘nuclear deterrent’ can never be used. It does not protect us. We do not have a realistic defence strategy if it is based upon nuclear weapons. These illusory arguments need to be shown up for what they are.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making?

The argument on the left-hand side is simply another rationalization. It is empty and entirely lacks credibility.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it?

I have already answered this. I do not want the United States ‘fully committed to the defence of Europe’ when the cost is our liberty and independence. They tie us into attacks and alliances which are not necessarily in Europe’s best interest. They consider that ‘defending Europe’ from threats, that they have helped to create, gives them the right to interfere with domestic internal politics. I wish they’d spend more time seeing to the interests and needs of the disadvantaged millions in their own country. I fear that the ‘special relationship’ means that our big American cousin covers his fist with a soft velvet glove. But, if we show too much independence and initiative in determining our own best defence policies, the glove will be thrown aside, and we'll feel the brutal iron fist experienced by Chileans, Nicaraguans and others. Many Americans are also deeply distressed by their Administration’s warmongering.
(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? OR Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

Nuclear weapons do not play a 'vital defence role'. They simply help to perpetuate the militarization of Europe and the progressive erosion of our democracy. I want to see the resources now being spent on armaments in this country instead being spent on constructive long-term public programmes such as education and health. The effort should go, not into more nuclear or conventional arms, but into investment in combating racism, in understanding and respecting other cultures, in building mutual concern among our populations. That will be our strongest and most effective long-term defence policy.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

Britain's nuclear weapons have brought her no prestige or influence. This whole idea is inappropriate and completely out of place. If Britain wants to be more significant internationally, she would do well to detach herself from a lame dependence upon the United States and to achieve it through a policy of non-alignment.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? OR Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

The Trident programme is ludicrous. But, unfortunately, like many ludicrous things, it is also very dangerous and expensive.

2 NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance? OR Should British obligations to NATO be met by strengthening conventional forces where necessary within an overall non-nuclear strategy as recommended in B?

We have already seen why the argument in the left-hand column is spurious. Britain's long-term security does not depend upon NATO, still less upon NATO nuclear systems. I want to see NATO and the Warsaw Pact dismantled. I can understand why the Labour Party argues as on the right-hand side. Conventional forces do not need to be strengthened for defence purposes. But, after years of propaganda to the contrary, by both Labour and Tory governments, this is too difficult to get across quickly. They'd have a hard task explaining how they've conned us and wasted our resources not for defence but to appease our masters in the Alliance. So I understand why political considerations mean that the Labour Party has to approach the question of
NATO and conventional weapons build-up rather delicately. That's the problem with acquiescing in expenditure on successive falsehoods – it comes back and haunts you!

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible? OR Do the large numbers of nuclear facilities yielded to the US erode British sovereignty? Would their removal do no more than restore a normal peacetime relationship?

The response of the American administration to the decisions taken during the recent Labour Party conference clearly showed up what the real situation is. Listening to the American Secretary of Defense gave me a surreal feeling that our apparent ally was all at once a potential enemy, threatening the withdrawal of economic favours and the deliberate destabilization of this country, if we dare to try to escape from its sphere of influence. Will America do everything it can to undermine a democratically elected government, which wants a very sane and rational defence policy that is not in accordance with American interests? I think that Labour Party policy will force the Americans out into the open about what really is the underpinning of the NATO Alliance – American economic and security interests. This will show what has been going on for the past forty years in Europe.

And our own governments have up until now been prepared to play along with this. With Cruise missiles, which are said to be protecting our freedom, they are prepared to deny people living in our towns and villages freedom of movement on our own roads when there is a Cruise convoy moving through, freedom of protest, freedom of access to common land and the sacred land of Salisbury Plain. So what price our sovereignty and independence?

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally? OR Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any superpower confrontation unless bases are removed?

I think that the right-hand side is true. The mobility of Cruise missiles means the blanket targeting of most of southern England. If Britain gets rid of nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union has explicitly said that it will take Britain out of its primary list of targets. Obviously, if there were a general nuclear war, we would be killed eventually, by fallout or by nuclear winter, if by nothing else. But, without US bases or weapons targeted threateningly on the Soviet Union or other countries, we would be protected from first or second strikes.
(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella?  

OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US ‘umbrella’ than any other Western ally – or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

It cannot be called an umbrella. On the contrary, we are all implicated in the terrible risks of American first-strike planning, without having any influence over it. We are endangered, not protected.

Moral Considerations

I would rather respond to all of these questions at once.

I feel very strongly that there is a rational aim to human life. It is survival. And not just survival on any terms, but survival with an increasing quality of life. I believe that the conditions for that survival are our recognition of the degree to which we are mutually dependent upon one another, and upon the birds, the animals, the fish, the plants, the foodstuffs, the resources of the earth. And that is why I believe that to poison the possibility of our future by the indiscriminate build-up of industry and weapons manufacture in the present is a fundamentally irrational course of action for the human race to be undertaking. It is irrational for us to be building up weaponry that deliberately threatens the immediate annihilation, or slow desecration, of all the earth’s natural living systems. Any act which tends in that direction is, if you like, irrational in evolutionary terms. And that is also to say that it is immoral. I get very irritated with people who try to separate rationality and emotion, and tell us at Greenham that we are being emotional and should be more rational. On the contrary, we should all be more emotional about the death of a child, our own child or someone else’s, about the death of a friend, about the death of a soldier. Only in that way can we begin to understand the significance of what it means to threaten the deaths of millions of people. The two cannot be separated, and it is very dangerous to try to do so. We know at a very gut level that to kill another person is wrong, and that to plan to kill another person is wrong. So to plan to kill on a large scale by making and deploying nuclear weapons is that much more wrong. We know that all of these things are wrong. We are not prepared, either to do this ourselves, or to have it done in our names. And simply saying ‘no’ is not enough, because it is assumed in our political system that our silence, and our acquiescence, and our vote every five years, is a sort of blank cheque to our governments to perpetrate these acts of atrocity. If we know that this is wrong, then we must take those kinds of action that will prevent governments from doing it in our name, otherwise we are hypocrites. That is what we are trying to do at Greenham by taking nonviolent direct action. We are trying to bring home the implications of what they are doing to the workers who are producing the
weapons of mass destruction – the research workers at Aldermaston, the military workers at bases like Greenham, Welford, or Upper Heyford, those who drive the launchers for Cruise missiles, each convoy of which carries about 200 times the destructive power of the Hiroshima bomb. What I do is to place my own body in front of them and say, ‘No. Stop. Are you prepared to follow through the logic of what you are doing, and run me down and kill me? Are you yourself prepared to do this act of bestiality and barbarism?’ And, if they did run me down, they would at least be consistent and show that they thought that it was all right to kill those they disagree with. But most, in fact, stop. And then we ask them, ‘If you are not prepared, consciously, and in front of your own eyes, to murder another human being, what on earth are you doing playing your part in a system designed to destroy large numbers of human beings far away?’ We are trying to bring the morality of what they are doing close to them. That is one of the main troubles with nuclear weapons. In the First World War everyone was aware of the shattered, disfigured men who came back from the Front. Even the commanding officers were sickened. That was why it was to be ‘the war to end all wars’. But now those who plan, prepare, and build for war are psychologically distanced from it. The destruction will take place a long way away and they expect to be safe in their bunkers. Those who suffer will be the women, the children, the civilians, those in the cities, those trying to live off the land, the animals, the birds, the fish. The innocents. There is this huge gap between the military’s targeting and strategic thinking, and the actual act of killing. It is a very dangerous gap for the survival of the world. By taking nonviolent direct action we are trying to close that gap. We say ‘Are you prepared to kill me? Because I am telling you that you cannot kill someone else in my name’. So for me that is the starting point of my morality.

And that is why Greenham is women only. This whole desire to control, to dominate, to repress, and eventually to destroy, those who are different from you, is a male response. It is the view that ‘might is right’, that the person with the loudest voice, or the biggest bomb, has a right to impose his will on other cultures, other needs, other ways of looking at the world. It is no accident that the only women who are allowed to gain power in this very male system, are women, like Thatcher, who play the game in the ways that the most right-wing men want the game to be played. And women who approach things in a different way, who do not want to discuss these questions in the purely rational ways that men recognize, but think that to separate reason and emotion is to have lost touch with part of what makes human beings human, are just not listened to. Their views and needs simply don’t get a hearing. Then the women lose confidence in themselves and do not recognize the validity of their own instinctive responses, because they have been so conditioned to being shouted down or ignored. For example, I see that I am the only woman you are interviewing. This happens again and again. If the peace camp had been mixed, it would have been a man who would have been listened to as a spokesperson, because you would have regarded his views as more important. So the
decision to make Greenham women-only is not a decision to exclude men, but a decision to include women, all women. In Greenham, women's views can be heard, and in this way what was at first ridiculed has now come to be adopted in other parts of the peace movement. Women's understanding of peace is not just an absence of weapons or war, but is something that has to be created positively through nonviolence, imaginative risk, commitment, and a readiness to change one's own ways of working and inter-relating. It requires much more courage and hard work than any war-fighting would require. War-fighting is a passive response to conflict, which simply perpetuates the whole thing. Peace means struggling towards a completely different way of living and looking at the world, in which the language and political categories which make war possible are transcended. Peace cannot be separated from justice, freedom and independence. There are no short cuts. We all have to take responsibility for making the changes and refusing to benefit from abuse of our own power. But the future is so precious that it is worth going to prison if that jolts one more person out of the lethargy of hopelessness.

We are often told that we must be realistic and begin from where we are. I agree. But, in order to know what the first steps are, we need to know where we want to go. So let's begin by imagining what the world would have to be like if we are to survive, and are to be able to look forward to healthy, fulfilled lives for ourselves, and for our children and grandchildren. Imagine that we have succeeded in getting there. Then turn round, and retrace the path, step by step, until we reach where we are now – our starting point, this huge, paralysing mass of problems, which so many people feel so utterly powerless to change. And now we know what the first step is that we have to take, because there is no alternative if we are to reach the goal of survival. It is the step we have to take, not the easiest or the one that looks most convenient or most politically plausible. And it is the step that women, not only at Greenham, but all over the world, are taking.

Recommendations

1 Yes.
2 Yes (See A2(A)(v)).
3 Yes.
4 Yes (See B(iii)).
5 Yes.
6 Yes (See B(vi)).
7 Yes.
8 Yes (See A2(B)).
9 And start the whole thing off again? No.
10 Yes.
11 Yes (See B(iii)).
12 Yes (See B(iv)).
13 Yes.
14 Yes (See B(vi)).
15 Yes (See B(vi)).
16 Yes (See C1).
17 No (See C1(iv)).
18 No. Britain should leave NATO (See C2(i)).
19 Yes. And the American military presence should be removed entirely (See B(vi) & C2(ii)).
20 See 18.
Biographical Note

Born in 1931, Anthony Kenny was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in 1955, but returned to lay state eight years later. Between 1963 and 1978 he was a lecturer in Philosophy at Oxford University and since 1978 has been Master of Balliol College. He has also been a Visiting Professor at a number of American universities.
Among his many publications on philosophy and public affairs, particular mention should be made here of *The Logic of Deterrence*, published in 1985 by the Firethorn Press.

**Editorial Comment**

These answers were communicated in an interview at Balliol College on June 3, 1986. They represent the thinking of a philosopher who, among other things, has for over twenty-five years been concerned, both with questions of human intention and purpose in general, and with how this bears on the morality of nuclear weapon deployment in particular. Dr Kenny does not see professional philosophy as an enterprise which is divorced from the practicalities of public life, but has consistently emphasized the importance of its rôle in clarifying the concepts used by decision-makers and others when they formulate, justify, and criticize, official policy. Perhaps of particular interest here is the strictness of the conditions upon which he is prepared to allow that the continued deployment of nuclear weapons is morally justified. This can be found in his answers to questions (iv) and (vi) under *Moral Considerations*, and in his response to Recommendation 9.

**DR ANTHONY KENNY**

**A Global Policy**

1. **The History of the Past Forty Years**

(i) *Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?*

   I think that nuclear deterrence has been one of the factors that have kept the peace, but there have been other factors, too. If you like, it has been overdetermined, so that these alternatives are not mutually exclusive.

(ii) *Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?*

   Mutual possession of an invulnerable second strike nuclear strategic force does, I think, make full-scale war between the great powers less likely. But it means that smaller powers, like Libya or Vietnam, are more difficult for the great powers to deal with, because they are inhibited from using their full military potential against them, for fear of being drawn into a nuclear confrontation with one another. To this extent I think that it does invite sub-deterrent encroachment.
(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has ‘flexible response’ dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

The limited options introduced in order to enhance strategic deterrence are dangerous. Flexible response has, indeed, dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war. But I do not agree with the opening statement on the right: I don’t think that, on the whole, military planners have been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority, if that means actually intending to plan seriously for a nuclear war. At least, not during the years when Mutual Assured Destruction was official doctrine. Although there has been a definite change of policy with the advent to power of those in favour of the recommendations of the Committee on the Present Danger.¹ They do seem to be talking about the possibility of nuclear war-fighting.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

I would certainly agree with the right-hand side here.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

I agree with the statement implied in the first question on the right. The idea of ‘parity’ is illusory, and ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ self-contradictory. As a result, although there have been perfectly genuine people working for arms-control, the constraints within which they have had to move, have meant that arms-control has never slowed down the arms race, and has in some cases even speeded it up.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

I agree with the right-hand side here – mainly as a result of having read Lawrence Freedman’s book, ‘The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy’.

¹ Formed in 1976 to warn Americans of the danger of the Soviet military build-up. A number of Committee members subsequently joined President Reagan’s administration.
2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future?

Yes, I think that new generations of nuclear weapons do significantly increase the threat of a first strike. Weapons such as Cruise or Pershing II may not have been intended as first strike weapons by the West, but I am sure that they are seen as such by the East:

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure?

I agree with the implication on the right-hand side here.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end hostilities swiftly?

Here, we really don’t know, do we? I doubt that anyone would deliberately intend to fight a limited nuclear war, because of the enormous risk of escalation. But, if it came to it, escalation is not inevitable – both sides might draw back as a result of the initial shock. In their Pastoral Letter the American bishops had rather a good qualified phrase on this: ‘To cross this divide (ie from the conventional to the nuclear arena) is to enter a world in which we have no experience of control, much testimony against its possibility and therefore no moral justification for submitting the human community to this risk.’

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence?

Yes, I do think that new generations of battlefield and intermediate nuclear weapons dangerously lower the nuclear threshold.

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons?

I think that, if SDI began to look at all plausible, if it seemed to offer an effective defence of centres of population against nuclear attack, as President Reagan still argues, then it would be extremely destabilizing. One of the regular defence correspondents in the American Harper’s magazine has pointed out how extraordinary it is that nobody seems to have noticed that, if it worked, it would be a most effective offensive weapon.

But, since it is unlikely to do more than provide some defence for a limited number of nuclear weapons, it is probably more of a red herring than a serious threat. A surprisingly large number of American scientists say that they do not believe in it, and for this reason refuse to take money for it – which is a most unusual thing for university faculties to do!

(vi) Is the threat of ‘horizontal’ nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? Or Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

I don’t really think that there is a close link between the continued build-up of nuclear weapons systems by the established powers, and the spread of nuclear weapons to potential nuclear powers. They are, I think, separate dangers. Of course, the fact that the major nuclear powers are continuing to build up their arsenals, makes it seem pretty hypocritical when they call for others to sign Non-Proliferation treaties, and so on. But the risk of nuclear war between, say, India and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, or Israel and Syria, is influenced by local factors, which would not be much altered by even quite sweeping changes in superpower policies.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? Or ‘arms-control’ an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

I do not hold out much hope for the current arms control and disarmament talks. The way ahead is, as implied on the right, by unilateral disarmament initiatives offered as part of a general process of nuclear disarmament. But it is not true to say that this is the ‘only safe policy’. No policy is safe in these circumstances. We are talking about relative risk, about the probability of various evils happening, and the size of those evils. On prudential grounds I subscribe to the Pascalian calculation here: we should prefer nuclear disarmament to continued nuclear deployment, because the worst case with the latter is so much worse than the worst case with the former.

But it’s principally for moral, rather than for prudential, reasons that I prefer nuclear disarmament.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely? Or Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?

I have to admit that global nuclear disarmament might make a major conventional war slightly more likely.
(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war? OR Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?

A major conventional war might well be as destructive as a nuclear war, which was limited to a restricted number of exchanges (after all, the last war was in a sense a limited nuclear war). But I do think that, in general, a conventional war, however terrible, would be preferable to a nuclear war, because of the risk of the latter becoming an all-out nuclear war.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out? OR As with nerve gases in the last war, would there be no incentive to resort to capabilities which the other side has as well?

As I have said, there is no safe policy. There is no way that we'll ensure that there will never be war. It might well be that, if a major war broke out between the superpowers after there had been apparent nuclear disarmament, each side would take steps to redevelop nuclear weapons before the other. But the essential strategic planning on both sides would have been for conventional war, so I think that even in that case the risks would be lower than they would be if war broke out now.

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility? OR Is to argue that even multilateral nuclear disarmament is not desirable to give up all hope of a rational world-order?

The terrible risks involved in the continuing deployment of nuclear weapons by the great powers, means that we should certainly move in the direction of global nuclear disarmament as fast as we can safely do so.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely? OR Do the years before 1914 show what happens when military planning and the arms race control political choices? Do present strategies make nuclear war almost inevitable under likely future conditions? Is global nuclear disarmament the only rational policy?

Global nuclear disarmament might make a major conventional war slightly more likely, but it would make nuclear war less likely. A continuation of current policies does not make nuclear war almost inevitable, although it is potentially very dangerous. I see the present situation as relatively stable, but highly vulnerable. We are not so much sliding down a slope towards a precipice, as standing near the edge of a cliff. As long as we stand where we are, we will be all right. But something which pushes us a little in the wrong direction, like an unexpected political crisis, could make us fall very fast. This is not a state of affairs that we would be wise to live with.

But argument from historical analogy is seldom reliable. Examples can often be used to support opposite conclusions. The Munich crisis can be said to
show that it’s very important to stand up to dictators, but it can also be said to show the danger of being obsessed by the threat from world Bolshevism. In any case, analogies drawn from the pre-nuclear era are quite unreliable when applied to the post-nuclear age, because the kind of decisions, which it was then rational to take, no longer are.

B NATO Policy

(i) **Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe?**

I do think that the Soviet Union and her allies enjoy quite a large military superiority. I don’t think that the two sides are in this sense evenly matched. But, since it seems that you need a three-to-one advantage in order to be able to take the offensive confidently, the West is not too badly placed defensively. I would not myself be against a strengthening of Western conventional forces, if this was needed, so long as it was done in a non-provocative way.

(ii) **Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power which will take advantage of unilateral Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control agreements by Western determination and strength?**

I tend to agree with the right-hand side here. I do not think that the Soviet Union is at the moment anxious for territorial expansion. But that is not to say that, if there were a rush to disarm by the West, she would not take advantage of it, and perhaps as a result again become more expansionist.

(iii) **Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons?**

I am firmly on the right-hand side here.

(iv) **Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing?**

The idea on the left, that the balance is delicate, and that the West has to match every Soviet system, is quite wrong. If deterrence works at all, it is very crude, and depends upon uncertainty, not the kind of intricate numerical balancing that is characteristic of war-games. It is also true, I think, that the West has initiated most phases of the arms-race, and that the overkill is such that a freeze could be offered or cuts made without risk.
(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence? OR Should NATO exploit her lead in 'emerging technology' to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

The question of whether to persist with 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies would remain, even if the nuclear components were removed. They are conventional, as well as nuclear, strategies. I do think that they are unnecessarily provocative, and my response is to agree with the implication on the right. I don't think that we should put too much trust in 'emerging technology'.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? OR Is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

I would say 'no' to what is implied on the left. The fact that, at the moment, American troops are essential to European security, does not reflect much credit on Europe. I have come round to the view of Hedley Bull, who used to be Head of International Relations here and died last year. In one of his last articles he argued that, although it was appropriate that immediately after the war the shattered and separated states of Western Europe should become clients of America, now that they are comparatively united, and, in terms of population and economic power, comparable to either of the two superpowers, they should take on responsibility for their own defence. It might be objected that Russia would not like two great power blocs ranged against her, but, if China were brought into the equation as well, we could move towards some rough kind of balance between the four, with no one power dominant, and no two in alliance with one another. In a commencement address I was giving in Ohio the other day, I said that this should be a prospect which might please the Americans, many of whom resent the way they feel that they contribute disproportionately to the defence of an ungrateful Europe. I think that the Libyan raid may prove to have been a turning-point in the relations between America and her Allies. Even in the middle of the Vietnam war, I do not remember such a divergence of views. Every European government, except our own, and the majority of the population in every country, including our own, disowned the American action. I would like to see Western Europe take on more of her own defence.
Dr Anthony Kenny

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

I would imagine that some multilateralists are sincere, and some are not. But it has always struck me as remarkable, that, for some reason, everybody claims to be a multilateral disarmer – including even those who actually want to increase our armaments. Nobody admits to being an ‘armer’!

As for the accusations on the left, I have openly said in my book that I would like us to go much further than a freeze. I also explained that clearly to those who are organizing the ‘Freeze!’ campaign, when I was asked to be a spokesman for it. They said that this would not embarrass them at all. The campaign deliberately embraces unilateralists and anti-unilateralists, who can combine together to work for the intermediate goal of a nuclear weapons freeze. This happens all the time in politics. There is nothing insincere in collaborating with people on a particular shorter term goal, even though, having achieved that goal, you may then have to walk your separate ways.

C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain’s deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?

I take the right-hand alternative here.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making?

I suppose that, whether we like it or not, we are a ‘second centre of decision-making’. It is possible, for example, that Mrs Thatcher left open the option of using nuclear weapons during the Falklands war. But I don’t think that this has any significance, so far as the global superpower confrontation goes.

As to the question, whether, following on from my answer to B(vi), a more independent Western Europe, responsible for its own defence, would need a
strategic nuclear deterrent, held on the strictly conditional terms laid out in my book – I'm not sure. When I wrote my book, I was thinking within a NATO context, and there European nuclear weapons don't serve a helpful purpose at all. Since the Libyan adventure, I have come to favour the idea of detaching Western Europe from American interests, but I haven't thought through the implications for nuclear weapons policy. I would like to think more about that.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? Or Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

I am inclined to agree with the implication on the right.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? Or Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

I think that the past costs of the British deterrent have been comparatively small. But, if we move on to Trident, this will eat more and more into the budget. I must say that I would prefer an overall reduction in the defence budget – but, if the only two alternatives were, either to remain nuclear, or to increase the defence budget slightly, I would favour the latter.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? Or Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

Too much importance is attached to prestige. I would prefer it if France, like other countries, gave up her nuclear weapons capabilities, but I have no fear of France gaining prestige at Britain's expense, if she did not.

On the other hand, I do not attach much credence to the idea that British nuclear disarmament would be a 'good example' to others, who would then want to emulate her altruism. As recent talks in Moscow suggest, a unilateral British disarmament gesture could on its own achieve quite a substantial Russian reduction. But this would be the result of concrete bargaining. It is possible that this might initiate a general process of nuclear disarmament.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? Or Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

The implication on the right is correct here.
2 NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance?

I agree with what is implied on the right, with the single qualification, that, for reasons that I have already given, I am no longer convinced that membership of NATO serves our interests best. So I would rephrase that as 'British obligations to the defence of Europe and the West . . . ', instead of 'British obligations to NATO . . . '.

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?

The presence of American bases does erode British sovereignty, although probably less so than her membership of the European Economic Community. And, if a major war broke out or was in prospect, I don't think that the putative British 'veto' would deter the American President from using those bases. It would be better were they withdrawn.

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally?

I agree with what is said on the right, although I do not think that the Soviet Union would lose all interest in Britain, if she were unilaterally to disarm and American facilities were removed.

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella?

I don't want to be sheltered by anyone's nuclear weapons, American or British. But I certainly think that, if we tell the Americans to leave, we will have to depend upon ourselves much more.
Moral Considerations

(i) Is it morally right to pursue the policy least or are there actions which are in themselves likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong?

I endorse what is implied by the questions on the right.

(ii) In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies? Is the only relevant point here that a nuclear exchange of almost any kind would in itself cause unimaginable suffering to largely civilian populations?

Here again, I would agree with what is on the right, depending to some extent upon what goes into that ‘almost’.

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use? Is there no such thing as a fully deployed weapons system which is a bluff? Is to deploy nuclear weapons to intend to use them in certain circumstances?

I think that to deploy nuclear weapons is to be willing to use them, rather than to intend to use them. It implies a conditional willingness that they should be used. In other words, it is an option that you have not ruled out. With that qualification, what is written on the right is correct.

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence?

So here, if we change ‘intention’ to ‘willingness’, I would accept the argument on the right. The continuing development and deployment of nuclear weapon systems is immoral in so far as it does involve such conditional willingness.

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and world poverty and disease? Is it a scandal that such huge resources are devoted to the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and not to the alleviation of suffering?

It is wrong to give the idea that nuclear weaponry is the most expensive part of the arms race. In some ways nuclear weapons are comparatively cheap. But, with that qualification, I agree with the implied statement on the right.

(vi) Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons? Does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?

If by ‘Christian teaching’ we mean only what is in the Gospels, then this is very hard to answer, because so little is said about war, one way or the other.
But, if we take Just War theory to be an integral part of traditional Christian teaching, then I do indeed think that the use of nuclear weapons is condemned. So far as concerns their deployment, I would say that Christian teaching in the broader sense would only allow it on the terms outlined in my book. That is to say, temporarily, while the process of nuclear disarmament is being accomplished, and accompanied by a strict and explicit declaration that they will never be used under any circumstances, together with practical measures taken to ensure that this will be so.

Recommendations

1 Yes (See B(vii)).
2 Certainly on Anti-Satellite programmes. Not, perhaps, on all components of the Strategic Defence Initiative, because some are harmless and are likely to go ahead whether or not they are incorporated in SDI (See A2(A)(v)).
3 Yes.
4 (See B(iii)).
5 Yes. Although they do not all have to be immediate. They have to be seriously planned, seriously announced, and credibly put in train, so that the other side's intelligence knows that you really mean it.
6 I do not feel strongly either way about a European Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone.
7 I think that the powers who have not yet signed should do so. But I don’t think that it makes a great deal of difference.
8 Yes, although I think that it is optimistic to expect anything like this earlier than well on into the next century. I would be happy if it was down to what I call a ‘transitional deterrent’ before the end of the century.
9 I accept the idea of a minimum nuclear deterrent on two conditions. First, that it is transitional to complete global nuclear disarmament. Second, that people really would have to mean that they would not use it, if the worst came to the worst.
10 Yes.
11 Yes (See B(iii)).
12 Yes (See B(iv)).
13 Yes, but see No. 16 below.
14 Yes.
15 See No. 6 above.
16 Yes, if we are talking about our continuing to be a member of the NATO Alliance. If we had an effective Western European alliance, then, if it was considered to be necessary, I would hope that Britain and France would hand over their nuclear capability to a European command (See Cx(ii)).
17 Ideally, no. But, if the alternative was to keep nuclear weapons, yes (See Cx(iv)).
18 I am coming round to thinking that Britain should not remain inside NATO (See C2(i)).
19 Yes to all of this (See C2(ii)).
20 Britain should be prepared to leave NATO if all else failed.
Biographical Note

Born in 1929, Bruce Kent served as a Second Lieutenant with the 6th Royal Tank Regiment between 1947 and 1949, and then took a Law degree at Oxford University. He was ordained in 1958, served as a curate in Kensington and Notting Hill, and, between 1964 and 1974, was chaplain at London Univer-
sity. Since then, as well as being at the Church of St John the Evangelist, Islington, until 1987, he has been Chairperson of War on Want (1974–6), and, first Chairperson, then General Secretary, of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (1977–1985). He is now Vice Chairperson of CND and President of the International Peace Bureau.

Editorial Comment

These answers were given in an interview in Islington on March 6, 1986. They represent the response of someone who has been actively campaigning for peace for over twenty years, and has become widely influential as a spokesperson for CND and related organizations. The emphasis throughout is on the unusability of nuclear weapons, and on the consequent dangers inherent in defence policies based upon them. The answer to question A2(B)(iv) provides the wider conceptual setting for this. In addition, the central moral objection to nuclear weapon deployment is summed up in the answer to question (iii) under Moral Considerations. Of particular interest to the reader may be the answer to question B(vii), in which Bruce Kent explains CND’s central approach, and corrects a popular misunderstanding of it.

Mgr BRUCE KENT

A Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?

Neither I nor anybody else can answer the main question conclusively here, because you cannot change individual factors and re-run history in order to find out. But, by the way, I will not call what has happened since 1945 ‘peace’: the superpowers have worked out their wars in other people’s countries at a cost of something like twenty million lives.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?

I believe that, if nuclear weapons are possessed by two rational groups in opposition to one another, then the very possession of them, together with the threat to use them in retaliation, will actually prevent either side from initiating a nuclear attack. Each will know what the consequences would be. But I do not think that this has any effect on what you call ‘sub-deterrent encroachment’. Since the nuclear option is so irrational, I think that both sides, through
their satellites, and even by direct conflict, can risk sub-nuclear attack on one another.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has 'flexible response' dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

I think that the attempt to get out of the irrationality of this mutual suicide position has actually created its own irrationalities. By lowering the threshold, by producing tactical nuclear weapons and so on, the military planners, particularly in the West, have made the boundary between nuclear and non-nuclear war much easier to cross. Since I do not believe that it makes sense for either side to attack the other, I think that war, if it occurs, will come about by some miscalculation. And, in that situation, we will be the first to use nuclear weapons, because we have relied on them as if we could win. I think that the logical nonsense of this policy of 'flexible response' is that there must be an assumption that you can have a limited nuclear war, that you can fire nuclear weapons and stop at a certain level. I can see no support for that at all, and therefore I think that the whole system of 'flexible response' is flawed in its very foundations. (I must say, though, that I am not sure that it's true that military planners have been deliberately aiming for nuclear 'war-fighting superiority'. Some have, like Weinberger, but in general it's worst-case analysis that leads planners always to want a bit more, in order to be able to negotiate from strength. But I don't think that this could fairly be called a 'war fighting' mentality.)

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

There is no sense in having a profusion of weapons unless you happen to believe that limited nuclear war has got some sense. For deterrence against nuclear attack, all you need is a very small number of invulnerable submarines facing one another. You don’t need anything else, because every submarine is capable of delivering the most appalling second-strike retaliatory punishment, and, if people are not deterred by losing fifty of their cities, they’ll be deterred by nothing. So you certainly don’t need additional nuclear weapons.

The build-up of nuclear arsenals has been very dangerous, because, together with improvements in technology, this has inevitably been seen as a move towards first use, and even first strike, policies.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of 'nuclear defence' and 'parity' proved illusory and is 'multilateral negotiation from strength' a contradiction in terms? Has 'arms-control' been just another name for the arms race?
I think that 'parity' or 'balance' is the petrol of the arms race, because each side inevitably sees the other as ahead, and this impels both to try endlessly to 'catch up'. It is also plain that, although arms control has had a certain effect - for example the Partial Test Ban Treaty or SALT II could be said to be agreements in arms control, it has certainly not brought about a reduction in arsenals. The idea that there must be parity in numbers is part of a classic military approach, but is quite unnecessary if the aim is genuine nuclear deterrence.

So the idea of parity in numbers should be abandoned, and arms control measures should be pursued as steps on the way towards genuine disarmament, not as some kind of alternative to it.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

Somebody described the situation as two giants in a cellar fighting in the dark. Neither side has much idea of what the other is doing, so each pursues its research projects in the laboratories, pressing forward with whatever new scheme has become a possibility for fear that the other is doing the same. For example, the Cruise missile again became feasible as a warhead carrier in about 1971 or 1972, and was then developed under its own impetus, not as a response to Soviet SS20s. It was only when it came to deployment that the SS20 was used as an excuse to hang it on. Both sides do that constantly. It is the technology that is dictating the policy rather than the other way round.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

In any rational world a first strike remains inconceivable even for those who may think they have the capacity to attempt it, because they know that, if they did, atmospheric and other effects would cause incredible damage to themselves.

But the increasing threat to stability comes from the perception of the side which fears that it is at a disadvantage, and that the other side is gaining a superiority in first-strike capability. Greater accuracy and therefore counterforce capability, improved submarine detection, Star Wars (cloaking yourself in a lead jacket so you won't be vulnerable to the other side's attack) - put all those things together, and, if they follow a worst-case analysis as they have to, then I think that a first-strike perception is bound to develop on the other side. They will have to say to themselves at some stage 'are we going to let them get into a first strike position or not?' So it's the perception of the side that sees itself at a disadvantage that is, I think, the danger here.
(ii) Are command, control, communication and OR Does the amount of information to be intelligence facilities likely to remain processed, pressure of time and fear of secure? preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

Well, even now studies such as those by Desmond Ball¹ show that command and control systems are much more archaic than I think people realize, and much more dependent upon human error. As we move forward and produce faster weapons with shorter flight-times, we are constantly making command, control and communications more difficult with less time to respond. So I would say that we are moving towards a position of intolerable strain, where war by miscalculation does become more likely.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear OR Is the idea that nuclear war could be exchange would it be likely to end limited once it had broken out a dangerous hostilities swiftly? illusion?

I don’t know who supports the idea that a nuclear exchange could be limited now. And yet those who defend current policy have to argue that way. Carrington’s speech in January was very interesting in this respect. He said that, as well as having the function of deterring an enemy from using nuclear or other weapons, nuclear weapons also have the operational function of bringing the war to an end should deterrence fail. He has acknowledged the possibility of the failure of deterrence as very few people do, and he thinks that nuclear weapons can be used intelligently in that situation. I don’t.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and OR Do new battlefield and theatre weapons theatre nuclear systems reinforce threaten a dangerous lowering of the deterrence? nuclear threshold?

This has already been answered in AI(iii). Any weapons system that has behind it a strategy of first use lowers the threshold. It implies what is not possible.

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer OR Is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the hope of an effective defence against the most recent and destabilizing example nuclear weapons? of the process outlined in 1?

Well, it must be as on the right-hand side. Deterrence rests on the vulnerability of the opponent. Once his vulnerability is removed, deterrence is brought to an end, and that is very destabilizing. So there can be no argument but that SDI is destabilizing.

Beyond that, of course, it’s not going to work, apart perhaps from providing some sort of protection for land-based missiles – which is destabilizing in a different way, because it suggests progress towards first strike capability.

If the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, or defence against them, were genuinely the aim, then a far easier, cheaper and safer way of doing this would be by starting to remove them!

¹. For example, Can Nuclear War be Controlled? (International Institute for Strategic Studies 1981).
(vi) Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies?  
OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

If nuclear weapons are said to be essential for the defence of some countries, so must they be for the defence of others. It seems to me that logically proliferation is inevitable once the process has begun. It is true that it is remarkable that there are still only five countries that openly acknowledge possessing nuclear weapons, and perhaps two more that have them, and that proliferation is not moving faster than that. But, if we go on as we are, it will come. And the proliferation that no one is thinking about is the proliferation to sub-national groups – I see no reason why the PLO shouldn’t acquire nuclear weapons of some sort or other.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability?  
OR Is 'arms-control' an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

I repeat what I said in answer to AI(V). A search for 'parity', a gentlemen's agreement to keep present high levels of nuclear weapons in a certain pattern, is not what I mean by 'arms control'. I see arms control as part of the process of nuclear disarmament.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely?  
OR Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?

Well, I don’t think that even with conventional weapons only, war between the great powers is a rational option, because the level of destructive power is so vast that both sides would suffer enormously. But I would agree that we can’t just be leaving the world as it is, and simply remove the nuclear weapons from it. We have got at the same time to do a number of other things which will help to build confidence, interlock countries economically, and so on. But, even if present levels of distrust and hostility remain, I don’t think that, with nuclear weapons out of the way, there would be an incentive to war.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war?  
OR Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?

The assumption on the left-hand side is that there can be such a thing as a limited nuclear war, which, as I have said, I do not believe. But would a major conventional war be as terrible as, say, the accidental release of a flight of Cruise missiles? I don’t know. I don’t think that you can balance it. I don’t think that there is any way in which you can answer that question.
Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out?

This takes me into a strange world, because it assumes that hostilities continue in the absence of nuclear weapons, and that is not what we are working for. But I suppose it's true that you cannot 'uninvent' anything – things like the rack could be reintroduced, for example. If a third world war of a conventional sort started, I am sure that both sides would think of manufacturing nuclear weapons. But, if each side realized that the other had the capability as well, then they would, as it were, cancel each other out.

But the main point is that you cannot altogether remove risk from the world. At the moment the biggest possible risk is incurred by doing nothing about ongoing technology, and letting the present situation continue. A policy of proper nuclear disarmament would involve real, but much smaller, risks. If the house is on fire, whatever way you escape, you'll face risks.

Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility?

To abandon even a programme of multilateral nuclear disarmament is to give up hope of the future, which I think a lot of people are doing. Now we see people like Michael Heseltine suggesting that nuclear weapons in their country are going to be around as long as anyone else has got nuclear weapons. And I think that is giving up hope of multilateral disarmament. It's a great pessimism. The assumption is that we have always got to do the worst in life. Human beings have always got to behave in the most dreadful way. I don't think that's actually true in history. People do behave in other ways, and, once the general understanding has been reached that nuclear weapons cannot produce any intelligent military results, then we have a different sort of motivation for giving them up. We are not talking about giving up rifles or anything that would traditionally be called 'weapons'. We have got something for which there isn't a word. That's why Oliver Postage used the word 'geddon' for them (from 'Armageddon')—he says we shouldn't use the word 'weapon' at all. Vocabularies preserve ways of thinking. Once you use 'weapon' you've lost the argument. Even Reagan has now acknowledged in his 'Star Wars' speeches that indefinite reliance on nuclear 'weapons' is irrational and a policy of despair.

Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely?
The assumption on the left-hand side is that there is a rational person who wants war, and, in the absence of nuclear weapons, would not be deterred from having a war. I don't think that's the situation. No rational person could want war, but, because of our current policies and our technology, we are moving towards war. So I think that we are in much more of a 1914 than a 1939 situation.

But I do think that there is a great deal of quite disgraceful propaganda about that run up to the 1939 war, that is widely believed. Our predecessors in the peace movements were actually supporting the League of Nations vigorously, whilst a number of Establishment figures were opposing the League and appeasing Hitler.

B NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? OR Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

I'm not an expert, I just read the books. It's very difficult to know what you count and what weight you give to what you count. I would suggest that, if you put all the relevant factors into the soup bowl—such as, for example, the political unreliability of Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, which is a major issue, then the situation is that the two sides are probably evenly matched. But it's not the kind of question that can be easily answered. You can say that they have got more of one thing—tanks, for instance—and we have got more of another—say, anti-tank weapons. But it is not an equation that on its own makes much sense, because, even if they do have more of this, that, or the other, it does not follow that they have got a dangerous superiority. Strategically significant superiority means that there would be hope of something called 'victory'. And there would not be.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power which will take advantage of unilateral Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control agreements by Western determination and strength? OR Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?

My inclination is to choose the right-hand side of the page. That's not to say that the Soviet Union cannot behave disgracefully, which it clearly can, as can be seen in Afghanistan, or in the appalling purges of its own people. But to me the overall picture is clearly one of an encircled power, which has from the beginning been deeply conscious of the Western aim to 'strangle the baby of Bolshevism' in its cradle. If the Soviet Union is an expansionist power, then it is doing extremely badly. It has been thrown out of far more countries than it has occupied. With the single exception of Afghanistan it has maintained its Yalta boundaries.
(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons?

I don't believe that any of the Institutes of Strategic Studies, or their equivalents, would claim that there was an overwhelming conventional preponderance of this kind. But, even if this were true, the early use of nuclear weapons is no counter to the threat, because it rests on the false assumption that there can be a limited nuclear war. It always comes back to that.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing?

Well, indeed, both sides could offer unconditional cuts without risk. When you consider the number of nuclear weapons that there are — 50,000 or so — you can see that there is no 'delicate balance' at all. The numbers game just does not make sense. Both sides could make independent major cuts now.

(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence?

If deep strike and forward defence strategies include a nuclear component, as they do, then I can only repeat what I said about the idea of limited nuclear war. If we're talking about conventional weapons only, then I would have thought that it would be much better to get away from the provocative nature of deep strike strategies, and concentrate on holding your own territory, not striking at other peoples'.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported?

If you want Europe to be 'coupled' in this way, you don't need European-based nuclear weapons to do it. The Americans have got something like 300,000 troops and dependants in Western Europe, and, if that doesn't couple them, nothing will.

But I do not think that the threat is that one side will attack the other — what could either gain from direct assault on the other? The reality of the situation is that it is the superpowers who present the greatest possible danger to Europe, because their confrontation feeds and increases the technology of
nuclear weaponry. I want a nuclear-free zone in Europe. I want American troops out of Western Europe and Russian troops out of Eastern Europe.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

The right-hand side is my position. It is what CND is urging – unilateral disarmament initiatives by both sides as part of a general process of nuclear disarmament. We are not advocating immediate Western unilateral disarmament. You may ask why, if nuclear weapons are illegal, immoral, and suicidal, we are not advocating this. The answer is that for political reasons we have to compromise. In order to make some political gains, you have to accept the reality that you are not going to achieve these things straight away. In fact, it does not follow that, if one country has nuclear weapons and another does not, then the latter is likely to be open to nuclear blackmail – for example, the Americans did not try it in Vietnam. There is an inherent madness in threatening to use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear power – although the popular psyche wouldn’t accept this. But CND does not urge immediate and complete Western or Eastern nuclear disarmament. It urges unilateral initiatives where necessary, without which there is no hope of making any progress at all. The level of weaponry is such that we can all offer these initiatives without being unreasonable or putting stability at risk.

Opponents of CND deliberately foster the idea that we are in favour of immediate and complete unilateral Western disarmament – for example, Carrington and Howe have said as much in major speeches within the last 12 months. It is a fundamental point for CND to get across that this is quite untrue.

C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain’s deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?

I can think of no possible use that would not be suicidal. The single thing to be said in favour of British independent nuclear weapons is that they might deter the use of nuclear weapons by somebody else. That’s all. They do not even deter an enemy from invading this country with conventional forces.
There are also all sorts of other disadvantages with them, such as that they make disarmament negotiations more difficult.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making? OR Is the 'second centre of decision making' an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

I don’t think that we have heard from our European allies what they think of an independent British nuclear weapon. They seem just to leave us alone to do our own thing. If it meant that we had to cut down on our conventional contribution, that might be another issue – but at the moment we’re also spending quite heavily on that, too.

But there’s certainly no ‘second centre of decision making’ unless there is a prospect of doing what the capability is meant to suggest. Since that is not the case, there is no second centre.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? OR Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

Again, there is little evidence of serious American opinion about British independent nuclear weapons. As far as I can see, there is just a reluctant acquiescence that Britain wants to have them.

I don’t see a link between an independent British nuclear force and American commitment to Europe, since I can find no function for an independent nuclear force. The Americans are here, and are substantially linked to Europe anyway. I think that it is just a nuisance in terms of disarmament negotiations. It’s a joker in the pack. I don’t think that it guarantees anything.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? OR Can Britain’s nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

It is certainly, as on the right-hand side, at the cost of more important priorities. The questions are slanted in the direction of assuming that security is only purchased by spending money on weapons, be they nuclear or non-nuclear, and I think that this is only a small part of the real security picture. But, on the left-hand side, the very word ‘alternative’ is one that I do not accept, because you cannot have an alternative to something that is not there. Money spent on Britain’s independent nuclear weapons is money down the drain – it’s not defence at all.
(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

At least British nuclear disarmament initiatives can't make proliferation more likely, and can only encourage those in other countries who are anxious to take similar steps themselves. I agree that we must not make too much of this, but example can help, as we have seen in New Zealand.

In any case, I don't think that genuine influence depends upon weapons. Some countries of very small size have more influence than we have here - the Five Continents Peace Proposal is very important and has come from militarily small countries. Conversely, France may want to be the biggest arms-trader and nuclear dump in Europe. Fine. But that does not give her significant influence. There is nothing that France can do with all these things.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? OR Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

I deny the assumption behind the left-hand side. I think that Trident is not just a continuance of existing 'deterrent' forces, but has first-strike potential; violates the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and so on. There are many arguments against Trident, and, even for those like David Owen who want an independent nuclear weapon, it is not a good idea.

2 NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? OR Should British obligations to NATO be met by strengthening conventional forces where necessary within an overall non-nuclear strategy as recommended in B?

Since all NATO nuclear systems in Europe are first use systems, deployed according to military strategy, which, as we have seen, would be suicidal, I think that we should not continue to man such systems. This will no doubt be seen as a betrayal of NATO by the Carvers of this world, in a way that the abandonment of our independent deterrent will not. But it is not treachery to the Alliance to object to policies that threaten to destroy it. While we are in NATO and are genuinely concerned about security, let us talk cooperatively about meeting whatever the threat is that we are supposed to be meeting. But not with nuclear weapons of first use.

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1. An initiative launched in May 1984 by the Presidents of Argentina and Mexico, the Prime Ministers of Greece, India and Sweden and the First President of Tanzania.
(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?

American interference in British affairs is not negligible. There is legal interference, political interference, and so on. Our sovereignty is certainly being reduced. Southern Ireland has got more sovereignty in these matters than we have.

And, since many of the bases are first use bases, I don’t think that they contribute to the defence of the West. When they were set up, they were for planes like the B-29 which did not have the range to reach the USSR from the US, but now, with Trident submarines and so on, the original justification no longer exists.

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally?

So long as Britain remains in a nuclear alliance, we are going to be targeted. Since the accuracy of these weapons is so uncertain, even Sweden and Switzerland may be struck by nuclear warheads in a confrontation. Nobody is going to be safe. But I think that the removal of first use bases will make preemption much less likely, and will be a step in the right direction.

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella?

The problems with the wording on both sides here is that the word ‘umbrella’ has been used. Once you use the word, you have won the argument. If, instead, you were to say ‘Shall we shelter under the American lightning conductor?’, then the whole argument changes. American nuclear weapons endanger us rather than give us security.

In going non-nuclear ourselves we would be recognizing that politically we can’t get the superpowers to get rid of all their weapons immediately, and so we are doing what we can to take steps in that direction. But we are not saying that we want the Americans to remain nuclear indefinitely.
Moral Considerations

(i) Is it morally right to pursue the policy least OR Are there actions which are in themselves likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong? OR Is the alternative to excuse almost any act of barbarism?

I am obviously a ‘right-hand side’ person. There are some acts that are so abominable that no prudential arguments advanced in their favour can justify them. But, in addition to that, all such prudential reasons depend upon supposing things which have not, or have not yet, happened – for example: ‘If you do or don’t do this, then that will or will not happen’. I don’t think that this kind of speculation ever justifies the massacring of hundreds of thousands of people.

(ii) In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies? OR Is the only relevant point here that a nuclear exchange of almost any kind would in itself cause unimaginable suffering to largely civilian populations?

I have already answered this.

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use? OR Is there no such thing as a fully deployed weapons system which is a bluff? Is to deploy nuclear weapons to intend to use them in certain circumstances?

The right-hand side is correct. There is such an obvious gap in the argument on the left. What are the means being employed? It’s as if a burglar said ‘My sole aim is to feed my family’ – but what is he proposing to do in order to feed his family? He is preparing to rob the bank. In the case of nuclear deterrence, it may be your pious intention, as you formulate the terrible intention to do these things in certain circumstances in your mind, to hope that it will not come to this. But the fact remains that you have already constructed a grossly immoral capability, over those implementation you have no control. Outside circumstances may require you to do it one day, and you have already acquiesced in this. That is the key argument about the morality of deterrence.

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence? OR Is a conditional intention to cause indiscriminate and disproportionate suffering of this kind, whether admonitory, preemptive or retaliatory, ruled out by Just War theory? Was it wrong to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945?

As far as the left-hand side goes, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was quite unjustified and wrong. Actually, if people wanted to make things difficult for me, they would use a different example – say, the elimination of an enemy nuclear submarine base with a low-yield Pershing II warhead. Here we
have a discriminate weapon aimed at a military target. What is wrong with that? I think that there is something wrong with it, because all nuclear weapons, I'm told, produce radio-active material that is likely to go on damaging people for generations to come, so that, even in highly limited use like that, it is still an indiscriminate weapon. But this is playing around with the thing. There can be no Just War theory that justifies the use of nuclear weapons, so there can be no Just Deterrent theory, either.

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and world poverty and disease? Or is it a scandal that such huge resources are devoted to the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and not to the alleviation of suffering?

There is obviously a connection here, although, of course, it's not just nuclear weapons that are at fault, but all armaments in general.

It would undoubtedly be of far greater benefit to mankind if the resources now being squandered on the development, manufacture and deployment of nuclear weapons were instead to be channelled into a concerted assault on the causes of world poverty and disease.

vi) Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons? Or Does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?

Christian teaching undoubtedly condemns the use of nuclear weapons. It therefore also condemns the conditional intention to use them, which is inseparable from their deployment.

Papal and other pronouncements make it clear that we must move vigorously towards the goal of nuclear disarmament, and that the continuing deployment of existing weapons is only tolerated temporarily, and under strict conditions, while that process is being swiftly accomplished.

Recommendations

1 Yes.
2 Yes (See A2(A)(v)).
3 Yes. And the West should undoubtedly have stopped testing at once and unconditionally in response to the Soviet testing moratorium.
4 Yes (See B(iii)).
5 Yes (See AI(iv)).
6 Yes (See B(vi)).
7 Yes (See A2(A)(vi)).
8 Yes (See A2(B)).
9 Yes. But not because either superpower is entitled to these 'weapons', but because, given the political realities of the world, there is no way that either side is going to get rid of theirs while the other still has some. To call, therefore, for what would amount to unilateral superpower nuclear dis-
armament is to my mind counter-productive, since it will stop people taking the steps which they could take here and now.

10 Yes.
11 Yes (See B(iii)).
12 Yes (See B(iv)).
13 Yes (See C(i)).
14 Yes (See B(vi)).
15 Yes (See B(vi)).
16 Yes (See CI).
17 No (See CI(iv)).
18 Yes. But once again, as with No. 9, only because of the realities of the situation. We are going to stay in NATO, so let us by all means press for a non-nuclear strategy. Getting rid of American nuclear bases is going to be hard enough (See C2(i)).
19 Yes (See C2(i) & C2(ii)).
20 No.
Biographical Note

Major-General Yuri Lebedev is Deputy Departmental Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR. Born in 1925, he has been in military service since 1944, having graduated from military college and military-engineering academy. He subsequently served both in the field and in the central apparatus of the USSR Ministry of Defence. He is a specialist in the sphere of strategic arms, and took part in Soviet-American talks on the limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons.
Editorial Comment

This essay, entitled *The Arms Race and International Security*, has been written especially for this book, and translated by Natalia Mazitova. It represents the response of an experienced Soviet commentator to the questions sent. In order to help the reader to compare Major-General Lebedev’s analysis with that of other contributors, the editor has taken the liberty of adding the appropriate sub-headings and lettering necessary to coordinate it with the questions under *Global Policy* in Section A.

Major-General Lebedev sees the nuclear arms race as having been created and sustained by the United States, as part of a bid for global dominance. The US nuclear arsenal is intended, either for direct use in a disarming first strike, or, by threatening it, as an instrument of nuclear blackmail during times of political crisis. The deterrent role of nuclear weapons is discounted by the author, and the stress throughout is on the increasing instability and danger which inevitably results from the continued US drive for permanent military superiority, and the Soviet refusal to permit it. Military solutions can no longer be found for problems which are largely political. Major-General Lebedev’s central proposal is that this should now be recognized by both sides, so that political solutions can be found for political problems, and swift progress can be made towards the elimination of nuclear weapons altogether.

**MAJOR-GENERAL YURI LEBEDEV**

Mankind is entering the threshold of the twenty-first century with both concerns and hopes. The continued race for weapons, nuclear weapons above all, may lead to the incineration of our civilization in the nuclear flames.

**A Global Policy**

1 *The History of the Past Forty Years*

Having acquired nuclear weapons at the close of World War II, the United States military and political leaders thought that they could be used as the decisive instrument of foreign policy. This view appeared to dominate United States political philosophy and military strategy in the postwar history. The Americans initiated and continue to initiate every advance in the arms race. The development of nuclear weapons in the United States was followed by the production of thousands of nuclear warheads with which ever more sophisticated ground-, sea-, and air-based delivery vehicles were equipped for decades. Sophistication and build-up of other types of weapons – both mass destruction and conventional – were carried out in parallel without any interruption.
Let's analyse in retrospect the arms race unleashed by the Americans in the postwar period.

Stage One: Massive production of nuclear warheads and their delivery vehicles

The US had a nuclear monopoly from 1945 to 1949. By 1949 (when the Soviet Union staged its first nuclear test) the United States already had from 100 to 200 atomic bombs, and their carriers – B-29 bombers.

By 1957 – the time of United States rapid nuclear arms build-up – it had produced more than 2,000 nuclear bombs as compared with several hundred which the Soviet Union had.

At the same time the United States was stepping up the build-up of delivery vehicles – thousands of B-29, B-36, B-47, and B-52 bombers.

Stage Two: The race for nuclear missiles

In the period 1957–1962, America enhanced her nuclear arsenals from 2,000 to 4,000 nuclear warheads, and gave a powerful impetus to the development of fundamentally new delivery vehicles – intercontinental ballistic missiles of all basing modes. American scientists admit that as a result of this massive effort, United States supremacy in the nuclear field continued to be overwhelming in the early 1960s. The ratio between Soviet and American strategic weapons by 1963 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery vehicles</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>USSR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICBM launchers</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLBM launchers</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballistic missile Launchers</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>(20–40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of medium and intermediate range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic bombers</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So the American fostered myth about the ‘Soviet missile threat' had no grounds whatsoever. Yet, it was used to impart an even more powerful impetus to the arms race in the US – hundreds of ICBMs and SLBMs were developed and deployed, and their sophistication continued.

Each time the Soviet Union had to react to the American escalation.

Importantly, the countermeasures taken by the Soviet Union were not aimed at gaining military superiority, but were strictly determined by the need to offset the threat.

Rough strategic parity was established in the early 1970s. But it did not suit Washington which resolutely pushed the arms race into a new channel by deciding to equip its missiles with MIRVs.

By the time Richard Nixon came to the White House, the United States had already carried out the programme for the deployment of offensive strategic arms, and tested MIRVed Minutemen-3 and Poseidons in 1968. From
1970, the United States began to MIRV its strategic missiles on a massive scale.

Stage Three: MIRVing of missiles

In 1970, the first ten MIRVed missiles were deployed in American ICBM silos. Somewhat later, Poseidon Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) were test-launched from a submerged submarine. Several months later, in the spring of 1971, the first atomic missile submarine, with new missiles, was placed on combat duty. The United States had launched a new round of the nuclear arms race, once again trying to gain military superiority over the Soviet Union.

In the estimate of American experts, the United States had thereby more than doubled its nuclear warhead total from 4,000 units in 1970 to 8,500 in 1977.

But even this did not seem enough to Washington. In the late 1970s the Americans continued to escalate the nuclear arms race. They modernized the Minuteman-2 and Minuteman-3 ICBMs, stepped up the development of anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, and began to prepare for the re-equipment of twin atomic missile submarines with Trident-I SLBMs. On June 30, 1977 the American Administration adopted a decision to deploy air-launched Cruise missiles. This new hard-to-control and dangerous type of weapon created serious difficulties for the conclusion of the SALT-2 Treaty.

And, finally, in the autumn of 1981 the new American President, Ronald Reagan, announced a programme of 'America's strategic rearment' aimed at placing the arms race on an entirely new foundation.

In this context it would be logical to ask: what effect did the Washington-launched nuclear arms race produce on United States security?

In brief it was as follows. As a result of the nuclear arms race which went on for decades, United States security was seriously jeopardized rather than strengthened. Indeed, American territory is no longer immune to enemy military operations as it was at the dawn of the nuclear age.

As a result of the nuclear arms race, the world has accumulated tens of thousands of nuclear warheads which can destroy all life on the planet. Washington has itself become hostage to nuclear weapons and its myopic postwar policy. Weapons themselves have become a politically senseless and militarily reckless instrument of foreign policy.

And, finally, the accumulation of huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles has created such a dangerous factor for international security as a risk of unauthorized use of nuclear weapons. The price of technical error, or even the slightest inaccuracy in dealing with nuclear weapons has grown immeasurably. This has multiplied the threat to the security of the US and the rest of the world.
Stage Four: Giving a new dimension to the arms race

The current, fourth stage of the arms race which the US began in the late 1970s-early 1980s covers not only nuclear weapons, but all other types and systems of weapons and material, all forms of military activities. The race for offensive weapons – both nuclear and space-strike weapons – is becoming especially dangerous.

Sometimes it is claimed that in the last decades the threat of mutual assured destruction was a factor which prevented an all-out war. Nothing is more dangerous than this illusion. It is not owing to, but despite, nuclear weapons that mankind has avoided a thermonuclear disaster so far.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The appearance of new types and systems of weapons and means of their control is bound to make the strategic situation even more precarious. An analysis of the peculiarities and potential consequences of the current stage of the arms race bears this out.

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? Or is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

To begin with, the United States is rapidly building a new strategic potential in addition to the existing one. It is planning to deploy new MX and Midgetman ICBMs, two new types of strategic bombers – the B-1B and Stealth ATB, an entirely new Trident system, and new-generation Cruise missiles of all basing modes with enhanced range, accuracy and speed. As a result of this massive development, Washington intends to have sited several thousand delivery vehicles and about 20,000 nuclear warheads by the early 1990s.

It should be stressed that all these nuclear weapons systems are much more effective than the existing ones and are designed for use in a first, 'disarming' strike against the Soviet Union and its allies. The military-strategic consequences of the United States effort to build such a potential may be extremely dangerous – it may upset the world’s strategic stability and eventually trigger off a nuclear conflict. In other words, implementation of the American-planned programmes may precipitate a nuclear conflict which is bound to kill not only human civilization, but all life on earth. Now let's analyse the situation in more detail.

To begin with, trying to build a first-strike potential, Washington may develop an illusion that it will be in a position to use it. But this will be only an illusion, because the Soviet Union will never allow it to gain this potential for obvious reasons.
(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure?

Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

Secondly, a fundamentally new military-strategic situation is being created. The time for political decision-making is being reduced to the minimum, and weapons are being increasingly controlled by computers and other systems. At the same time, as the experience of the last few years has shown, even the most perfect technology is not guaranteed against mishaps which may spell disaster for all mankind.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end limited once it had broken out a dangerous hostilities swiftly? illusion?

Thirdly, the United States has carried beyond any reasonable limits the sophistication of combat control, communication and intelligence systems. In effect, it wants to create an effective mechanism for controlling nuclear warfare.

Nothing is more dangerous than such calculations which encourage the development of adventurist plans for waging 'controlled', 'limited', 'sustained' and other nuclear wars. Under these plans a nuclear conflict can be 'controlled' and even 'won' if the corresponding weapons and combat control systems are developed. But nuclear war does not recognize any plans, scenarios and the like. Its consequences cannot be predicted, even with the latest computers.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence? threaten a dangerous lowering of the nuclear threshold?

Fourthly, deployment of first-strike weapons near Soviet borders (Pershing IIs and Cruise missiles have already been sited in Western Europe) inevitably enhances the risk of nuclear war, because missile travel time to targets is drastically reduced, as well as the time for decision-making on retaliation. Needless to say, in this case the USSR will increasingly mistrust the intentions of the United States ruling circles.

Apparently, the importance of this factor in the future will be growing, if the nuclear arms race is not curbed, and, all the more so, if the Americans deploy Trident II SLBMs capable of dealing high-accuracy strikes from a much closer range than the existing ICBMs. Understandably, such developments are extremely dangerous for international security because they can act as a catalyst of nuclear conflict, including an unsanctioned one.

The US-planned deployment of new types of strategic bombers and Cruise missiles inevitably leads to the lowering of the nuclear threshold, and can directly provoke it. Indeed, what is the Soviet Union supposed to do if it detects the launching of Cruise missiles or bombers which can carry both nuclear and conventional weapons?
Development of such weapons systems is a very destabilizing factor directly threatening international security, all the more so since the United States bluntly says that these systems are dual-purpose. The Americans want to turn these systems into an instrument of nuclear blackmail, using them whenever the world tensions are escalated to a very dangerous level.

Even a cursory glance at the prospects of the world with nuclear weapons makes it clear that the continuation of the nuclear arms race will lead in the near future to the elimination of a number of deterrence factors, and nuclear weapons will turn from deterrents into weapons of aggression. In this situation even military-strategic parity will not be a guarantee against nuclear war.

The military-strategic situation in the world may become even worse under the influence of other factors which are not directly related to the nuclear arms race and the future of strategic East-West relations. The influence of these factors is so great that it is simply pointless to speak about the prospects of military-strategic relations without considering them.

Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? Or is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in i?

One of the most dangerous factors for international security is the United States programme for the development of space strike weapons in the SDI framework. Deployment of these weapons, and even their development are the most dangerous catalysts of a potential nuclear conflict. This is so because the latest strategic weapons developed under SDI exactly meet the American requirements for first-strike weapons - an ability to deal strikes at a wide range of strategically important targets almost instantly. It is clear that their development, not to mention deployment, has nothing to do with mutual deterrence. It is also obvious that their deployment will rapidly escalate the race for nuclear and other weapons in a whole number of directions. The Soviet Union can clearly perceive the dangerous potential consequences of space strike weapons. This is exactly why it favours an overall ban on their development and deployment.

The American President's brainchild has one more dangerous trait. If space strike weapons are used, the other side will have practically no time left for retaliation. But, as the Soviet Union has repeatedly stated, it will not allow the United States to build military superiority over it and will be compelled to take effective countermeasures even under the pressure of time limitations. As a result of these developments, strategic stability, about which the West is talking today with such enthusiasm, will be reduced to strategic chaos in which cause-and-effect relations will be extremely confused, and in which it will be highly difficult to make reasonable political decisions.

Deployment of a large number of satellites, combat and auxiliary stations, communication means, and potential Anti-Satellite (ASAT) systems may lead to serious complications because the breakdown of a militarily important satel-
lite may be interpreted as an attack. In many cases, it is very difficult to tell whether a satellite simply went out of action or was deliberately destroyed.

Deployment of a large-scale Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) system with space-based elements also spells a whole number of negative consequences. To begin with, unilateral deployment of these systems leads to a sharp destabilization of the entire military-strategic situation. The side which deploys it will have a potential capability of launching a 'disarming' nuclear strike in the hope that anti-missile weapons will intercept what remains of the other side's retaliatory potential. But the other side is not likely to sit idly by and watch the deployment of an ABM system. It is bound to take countermeasures which may further aggravate the military-strategic situation.

But even if both states deploy their ABM systems in parallel, strategic stability won't be enhanced because even a small lead in the deployment of such a system implies a marked destabilization of the global strategic situation. Meanwhile, one side will inevitably gain the lead because the development of ABM systems cannot be an even process.

SDI implementation will exacerbate the global military-strategic situation also because the very opportunity of limiting the arms race will be called into question. And this is perfectly obvious since, for a number of years, the Soviet Union and the USA were trying to reach agreement on limiting offensive strategic weapons but to no avail, although the problem of nuclear balance was not yet complicated by the 'space factor'.

Another set of negative military-strategic consequences stemming from SDI implementation is linked with a sharp acceleration of the arms race, which may eventually go out of control. SDI implies not only a large-scale ABM system, but also a new round in the arms race. So its implementation will spell a broad range of hard-to-predict consequences of this race in both technological and military-strategic aspects.

It is obvious that SDI implementation will give a powerful impetus to the use of the latest advances in science and technology for military purposes. The United States Administration does not conceal that this is its aim. Weapons based on fundamentally new technologies, both nuclear and conventional, will be many times superior to the existing armaments. In these conditions it will be even more difficult to preserve military-strategic parity, mistrust between states will grow, and military-strategic stability will increasingly depend on how quickly this, that, or the other state will manage to use the latest scientific and technical gains for military purposes.

(vi) **Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies?**

OR **Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?**

Military competition is growing more expensive all the time, arms spending is skyrocketing, and the priceless resources, which are rather limited, are
Major-General Yuri Lebedev

being increasingly squandered on the arms race. This process will trigger off serious economic, commercial and financial difficulties which are bound to exert a negative effect on the political and military-strategic situation in the world.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is 'arms-control' an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

To sum up, SDI implementation will seriously prejudice international security, and sharply destabilize the political and military-strategic situation in the world. On the other hand, renunciation of the Star Wars programme will not aggravate the existing security problems in any way, but will create favourable conditions for arms limitation and disarmament. A graphic example is offered by Reykjavik. Its results were actually torpedoed by Washington's reluctance to abandon its plans for space militarization, making it clear that the present Administration does not want to curb the arms race and rid the world of nuclear weapons.

The arms race, above all the nuclear arms race, has entered a fundamentally new stage of its escalation. If it is not curbed today, tomorrow may be too late. Military confrontation will grow markedly, strategic stability will be done away with, and the very possibility of ensuring international security will be called into question. Military and technical processes will create a situation in which nuclear weapons will no longer be able to act as deterrents. They will be turned into weapons of suicide.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Investing in the arms race, and staking the future on military-technical supremacy, are becoming not only absurd but suicidal. The Soviet leaders realize the danger full well. This is why they insist that military-technical methods of ensuring security should be renounced. These methods have been discredited once and for all. They may cost the world's nations not only their security, but even life itself.

The Soviet Union suggests settling the problem of security politically, above all, by reaching equitable and mutually acceptable agreements which would curb the nuclear arms race and lead to the complete destruction of nuclear arsenals.
Biographical Note

Born in 1916, Robert McNamara was Assistant Professor in Business Administration at Harvard between 1940 and 1943, served in the US army and airforce between 1943 and 1946, and was, first an executive, then President of the Ford Motor Company between 1946 and 1961. From 1961 to 1968 he was US Secretary of Defense. He moved on to become President of the World Bank between 1968 and 1981.
In *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, Lawrence Freedman writes:

No single public figure has influenced the way we think about nuclear weapons quite as much as Robert S. McNamara . . . While he was in office many new concepts were introduced, of which the most important were assured destruction, damage limitation and flexible response, which remain central to this day to strategic debate.

An expanded version of the two lectures quoted from in these answers will be published by the Pantheon Books division of Random House, Inc., New York, under the title *Blundering into Disaster*.

**Editorial Comment**

The answers recorded here are in part taken from an interview in London on November 18, 1986, but the bulk of the communication has been drawn from the two Sanford Lectures, delivered on November 8 and November 9, 1986, at Duke University, and arranged as was thought appropriate by the editor. They provide a detailed critique of the situation in which we now find ourselves by one of the principal architects of Western deterrent strategy. The answer to question AIiv describes the ad hoc nature of much of the decision-making, while answers to questions such as AI(ii), AI(iii), A2(A)(i), A2(A)(ii), and B(iii), outline the disastrous consequences which result from continuing to rely for defence upon a deterrent threat which it can never be in the interest of either side to carry out. Four suggested alternative directions ahead are rejected or qualified in the answers to questions A2(A)(v), A2(B), and B(ii), while Robert McNamara’s own recommendation is explained in his answers to questions A2(A)(vii) and B(vii).

**ROBERT S. McNAMARA**

**A Global Policy**

1. The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945? OR Has it mainly been other factors?

Although four decades have passed without the use of nuclear weapons, this is no guide to the future. We must differentiate clearly here between the period just after World War II (when the US had, first a nuclear monopoly, then an overwhelming nuclear superiority), and the situation as it is today. Nuclear weapons may have helped to keep the peace during times of crisis in the earlier period, but they can no longer be seen to be doing so now.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war? OR Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?
From the moment we in the United States lost our nuclear superiority, nuclear deterrence has been clearly and fatally weakened. Mutual possession of nuclear weapons on these terms means that it can never be in the interest of either side to initiate their use. That was why, as Secretary of Defense, in long private conversations with successive Presidents – Kennedy and Johnson – I recommended, without qualification, that they never initiate, under any circumstances, the use of nuclear weapons. I believe they accepted my recommendations. That is also why in Brussels in 1979 Henry Kissinger said, in effect, that Europe should not expect us to launch strategic nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union in defence of Europe.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war?

This is where the most dangerous illusions lie. First of all, there are no ‘limited nuclear options’. No human mind has conceived of how to initiate the use of nuclear weapons with a high probability of limiting the subsequent exchange. Realistic plans for doing that simply do not exist – as political and military leaders will tell you, if they are honest. So this cannot possibly ‘enhance deterrence’. One cannot build a credible deterrent on an incredible action.

And yet, for nearly twenty years, American strategists have attempted to formulate plans for the use of nuclear weapons that could move our strategy away from the targeting of Soviet cities and toward targeting of military forces. This trend has persisted to the present day, culminating in the view of Secretary of Defense, Weinberger, that the United States could actually achieve victory in such a war. According to Weinberger’s 1984–88 defence guidance document: ‘Should deterrence fail and strategic nuclear war with the USSR occur, the United States must prevail and be able to force the Soviet Union to seek earliest termination of hostilities on terms favourable to the United States.’ Similarly, in accordance with NATO strategy, 25,000 nuclear warheads have been deployed at sea and on land. They are supported by war-fighting strategies. Detailed war plans for their use are in the hands of field commanders. And the troops of each side routinely undertake exercises specifically designed to prepare for that use. General Bernard Rogers, the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces in Europe, has said it is likely that in the early hours of a military conflict in Western Europe, NATO commanders would in fact ask for the authority to initiate such use.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?
In the first half century of the nuclear age the world’s inventory of nuclear weapons has increased from zero to 50,000. On average, each of them has a destructive power thirty times that of the Hiroshima bomb. A few hundred of the fifty thousand could destroy not only the United States, the Soviet Union, and their allies, but, through atmospheric effects, a major part of the rest of the world as well. This situation has evolved over the years through a series of incremental decisions. I myself participated in many of them. Each of the decisions, taken by itself, appeared rational and inescapable. But the fact is that they were made without reference to any overall master plan or long-term objective. They have led to nuclear arsenals and nuclear war plans that few of the participants either anticipated or would, in retrospect, wish to support. Because we lack a long-run plan for the nuclear age, the number of weapons continues to multiply. And now we appear on the verge of an escalation of the arms race that will not only place weapons in space, but will seriously increase the risk that one or the other of the adversaries will be tempted in a period of tension to initiate a preemptive nuclear strike before the opponent can get in the first blow.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

As I have said, I do not think that mutual deployment of nuclear weapons, as part of a strategy which threatens their use should deterrence fail, can ever be stable. Within this context, the idea of ‘balance’ lacks application, and therefore sense. During the past forty years, arms control has been a positive rather than a negative factor. But we cannot be surprised that it has not secured crisis stability, when that has not, unfortunately, been the main priority for the negotiators.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

Looking back over the first fifty years of the nuclear age, we see that we have reached our present position by way of a long series of unplanned, piecemeal, ad hoc, decisions, taken by military and civilian leaders of East and West. There has been no clear grasp of the longer-term implications of these actions, nor general agreement on the goals towards which they should be directed. As a result, overall objectives have been poorly framed, and rarely adhered to in relation to particular weapon developments. New technologies have been allowed to develop almost unchecked, however threatening, and force-planning has not been properly controlled by strategic thinking. It is a process which has led to a world in which the two great power blocs, not yet able to avoid continuing political conflict and potential military confrontation, face
each other with nuclear war-fighting strategies and nuclear arsenals capable of destroying civilization several times over.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future?

OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

But it is when we look ahead to the deployment of the next generations of nuclear weapons that the greatest dangers threaten. Miniaturization is increasing the mobility, accuracy, and destructive power of weapons. In advanced stages of development are mobile land-based missiles; anti-satellite weapons; space-based systems; and land-, sea- and air-based Cruise missiles that are increasingly difficult to detect and hence increasingly difficult to limit by verifiable arms control agreements. Our current nuclear weapons-building programme, which is producing 2000 warheads annually, is the biggest in twenty years. And steps are underway to expand substantially, for the 1990s, both the production of the key nuclear materials – tritium, uranium, and plutonium – and the production of the warheads themselves. At the same time, our weapons laboratories are forecasting large increases in the number of underground tests required for the development of new types of nuclear arms. Above all, unconstrained weapons development and deployment over the next fifty years will lead, not only to increased numbers of weapons, but to greater danger of their use in time of tension – in other words, to greater 'crisis instability'.

There are two fundamental points to be made here.

First, the danger is not so much of a sudden attack 'out of the blue', when political conditions are in any case stable, but of the likely effect of new generations of nuclear weapons, deployed, as they are at the moment, as part of a war-fighting strategy, in times of tension and acute political crisis. Today we face a future in which for decades we must contemplate continuing confrontation between East and West. Any one of these confrontations can escalate, through miscalculation, into military conflict. In these circumstances, nuclear war-fighting strategies, integrally built into defence planning, will severely constrain political decision-making. In the tense atmosphere of a crisis, each side will feel pressure to delegate authority to fire nuclear weapons to battlefield commanders. As the likelihood of attack increases, these commanders will face a desperate dilemma: use them or lose them. And, because the strategic nuclear forces and the complex systems designed to command and control them are perceived by many to be vulnerable to a preemptive attack, they will argue the advantage of a preemptive strike.

The second point is that we are dealing in the first instance, not with actual plans for a first strike, but with each side's perception that there may be such
plans on the other side. Americans often say that they find it incredible that the Soviets could suspect us of planning for a first strike. For example, Reagan has said, ‘In 1946, when the United States was the only country in the world possessing these awesome nuclear weapons, we did not blackmail others with threats to use them. Doesn’t our record alone refute the charge that we seek superiority, that we represent a threat to peace?’ But the Soviets recall, not only Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but subsequent threats to use nuclear weapons by, among others, Harry Truman (Korea), Dwight Eisenhower (also Korea), Richard Nixon (Vietnam), and Jimmy Carter (Persian Gulf). The danger is that, at a time of crisis, each side will fear that the other is planning a first strike, and that it will be this fear which will mutually increase the pressure to preempt.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

This has already been substantially answered. The weapons are becoming more accurate, so to that extent command, control, communication and intelligence facilities are becoming more vulnerable. Clearly, not enough attention is being paid to this. It is correct to say that no well-informed, coolly rational, political or military leader is likely to initiate the use of nuclear weapons. But political and military leaders in moments of severe crisis are likely to be neither well-informed, nor coolly rational. During the seven years I served as Secretary of Defense, confrontations carrying a serious risk of military conflict developed on three separate occasions: over Berlin in August of 1961, over the introduction of Soviet missiles into Cuba in October of 1962, and in the Middle East in June of 1967. In no one of the three incidents did either side intend to act in a way which would lead to military conflict, but on each of the occasions lack of information, misinformation, and misjudgements, led to confrontation. And in each of them, as the crisis evolved, tensions heightened, emotions rose, and the danger of irrational decisions increased. In none of these cases did either side want war. In each of them we came perilously close to it.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end limited once it had broken out a dangerous hostilities swiftly? illusion?

As I say, no human mind has conceived of how to initiate the use of nuclear weapons with a high probability of limiting the subsequent exchanges. There are no such realistic plans. Even someone like Al Haig, who is convinced of the effectiveness of deterrence and opposed to a declared policy of ‘no first use’, has said that it is highly unlikely that nuclear war, once started, can be

limited. Any decision to use nuclear weapons would imply a high probability of the same cataclysmic consequences as a total nuclear exchange.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence? OR Do new battlefield and theatre weapons threaten a dangerous lowering of the nuclear threshold?

It is definitely not as implied on the left-hand side. New generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems are destabilizing. They do not enhance deterrence, for reasons already given.

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? OR Is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in 1?

Here we come to a very complicated subject. For the sake of clarity, I will distinguish between President Reagan's original proposal for the SDI, announced on March 23, 1983, which I will call Star Wars I, and subsequent alternative interpretations, which I will label Star Wars II.

Star Wars I is an attempt to reduce the long-term risks of nuclear war by substituting defensive for offensive forces. The aim is to create an impenetrable shield to protect the entire nation against a missile attack and therefore remove the need to threaten nuclear retaliation in order to deter attack. Indeed, with the shield in place, the President argued, we would be able to discard, not just nuclear deterrence, but nuclear weapons themselves. But, as Harold Brown, who succeeded Edward Teller as director of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, says, 'Technology does not offer even a reasonable prospect of a successful population defense. Both the United States and the Soviet Union will be able to undertake successful countermeasures against any system intended to defend urban-industrial centers and their populations, however many the layers of defense.' In other words, until there are inventions that have not yet even been imagined, a defence robust and cheap enough to replace deterrence will remain a pipe dream.

What is common to the many versions of Star Wars II is that they would all require that we continue to maintain offensive forces, but add the defensive systems to them. The aim is to enhance deterrence. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has written, 'Even granting – as I do – that a perfect defense of our population is almost certainly unattainable, the existence of some defense means that the attacker must plan on saturating it. This massively complicates the attacker’s calculations. Anything that magnifies doubt inspires hesitation and adds to deterrence. The case grows stronger if one considers the defense of Intercontinental Ballistic Missile launchers. The incentive for a first strike would be sharply, perhaps decisively, reduced if an aggressor knew that half of the opponent’s ICBMs would survive any foreseeable attack.' But there is a fatal flaw in this. The Soviets are bound to interpret Star Wars II as being designed to support a first-strike strategy. Why? Because a leaky umbrella offers no protection in a downpour, but is quite useful in
a drizzle. That is, such a defence would collapse under a full-scale Soviet first strike, but might cope adequately with the depleted Soviet forces that had survived a United States first strike. Nor are the Soviets likely to accept Reagan's pledge to share SDI technology with the Soviet Union in order to ensure that the programme will not lead to an American unilateral advantage. It was only two years ago that we refused to licence the sale to the Soviet Union of relatively simple personal computers. Are we likely to provide the Soviets with the technology that will help them to more effectively prosecute wars, whether they be with conventional or nuclear forces, in Afghanistan or Europe, or to undermine our competitive position in the commercial markets of the world? So, how will they react? Their promise to respond with a large offensive build-up is no empty threat. Each superpower's highest priority has been a nuclear arsenal that can assuredly penetrate to its opponent's vital assets. Such a capability, each side believes, is needed to deter the other side from launching a nuclear attack or using a nuclear advantage for political gain. We can safely conclude, therefore, from both the United States and Soviet statements, that any attempt to strengthen deterrence by adding strategic defences to strategic offensive forces will lead to a rapid escalation of the arms race. We cannot have both Star Wars and arms control. In sum, I can see no way by which American deployment of an antiballistic missile defence will strengthen deterrence. (It is sometimes argued that the threat of the SDI can be used as a bargaining chip. The claim is that it has already brought the Soviets to the negotiating table. If this is the case, then so much the better. But, by definition, bargaining chips are used to achieve a bargain, and so far there is no sign of this.)

Finally, there is the matter of cost. A full protective shield has been estimated at $1 trillion, with perpetual expenditure in the region of $100 to $200 billion a year thereafter to upgrade and modernize it. Thus, to deploy Star Wars would force us to divert massive amounts of money from conventional defence and from domestic programmes over a period of years extending well beyond the end of this century. The possibility of a cheaper alternative to Star Wars II will be considered in B(iii).

So none of these rationales offer a satisfactory approach to reducing the risk of nuclear war in the decades that lie ahead. They combine unattainable technical goals with a policy rooted in concepts whose validity died at Hiroshima. And they carry the certainty of high cost and a dangerous escalation of the arms race.
Let me just say this: If the United States and the Soviet Union were to move as far as Reagan and Gorbachev discussed moving at Reykjavik — in other words, the elimination of all nuclear weapons, except whatever was needed to prevent cheating — then I think that this would have a very positive effect on other powers and would reduce the danger of proliferation. It clearly could not be done — and Reagan and Gorbachev indicated that it would not be done — without the participation of Britain, France and China in the agreement. But if all five powers were to agree that they would move toward elimination of all nuclear weapons, then I think that this would increase the ability of those five powers to put pressure on other states to avoid nuclear weapons development.

So today we face a future in which for decades we must contemplate continuing confrontation between East and West. Any one of these confrontations can escalate, through miscalculation, into military conflict. And that conflict will be between blocs that possess 50,000 nuclear warheads — warheads that are deployed on the battlefields and integrated into the war-plans. A single nuclear-armed submarine of either side could unleash more firepower than man has shot against man throughout history. If the superpowers continue to weaken the arms control regime, as they have over the past six or seven years, the risk of the world ultimately facing a nuclear conflagration will continue to grow. We are on the verge of a dramatic escalation of the arms race — an escalation to levels that will be more and more difficult, if not impossible, to control. The risk that military conflict will quickly evolve into nuclear war, leading to certain destruction of our civilization, is far greater than I am willing to accept on military, political, or moral grounds. It is far greater than I am prepared to pass on to my children or grandchildren. This is the unplanned, and to me unacceptable, result of the long series of incremental decisions taken by military and civilian leaders of East and West during the first half century of the nuclear age. Can we work ourselves out of this position during the next fifty years?

The conviction that we must change course is shared by groups and individuals as diverse as the Freeze movement, the President, the Catholic and Methodist bishops, the majority of the nation’s top scientists, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and such leaders of Third World and independent nations as Rajiv Gandhi and the late Olof Palme. All agree that we need to plan to reduce the long-term risk of nuclear war, but there is no consensus on what
course to take. The changes of direction being advocated follow from very
different diagnoses of our predicament. There have been perhaps four main
courses of action proposed recently, to which I want to add a fifth. Two of
these, Star Wars I (the replacing of 'deterrence' with 'defence') and Star Wars
II (the strengthening of deterrence by adding defensive forces to the offence),
I have rejected. A third, the proposal of General Secretary Gorbachev to
eliminate all nuclear weapons through negotiations, I will discuss in A2(B). A
fourth, the idea of achieving a broad political reconciliation between East and
West, I will pursue further in B(ii). Clearly, it is desirable and is the context
within which responsible arms control negotiation should be conducted. But
it cannot be stressed enough that this process will require time, patience and
consistency of purpose. And there are limits to the results. It cannot be
expected to eliminate the periods of tension and confrontation which have
characterized East–West relations over the past four decades. It is not, there-
fore, a substitute for other actions designed to reduce the risk that military
conflict, rising out of such confrontation, will lead to the use of nuclear
weapons. Steps to control directly and reverse the arms race must go forward
in parallel with efforts to reduce political tension.

We are left, then, to turn to our final option: a re-examination of the military
role of nuclear weapons. We need a vision of long-term goals for nuclear force
levels, military strategy, and arms control agreements, that will have as their
main objective the minimizing of the risk of nuclear war. In the past we have
failed to achieve crisis stability through negotiation, because nuclear weapons
have been treated as if they could be deployed as part of traditional war-
fighting strategies. What I suggest is that we acknowledge once and for all that
this can no longer be the case. I propose that we accept that nuclear warheads
are not weapons – they have no military use whatsoever, except to deter one's
opponent from their use – and that we base all our military plans, our defence
budgets, our weapons development and deployment programmes, and our
arms control negotiations on that proposition. The ultimate goal should be
that of mutual deterrence at the lowest force levels consistent with stability.
If the Soviet Union and the United States were to agree, in principle, that each
side's nuclear force would be no larger than was needed to deter a nuclear
attack by the other, how might the size and composition of such a limited
force be determined? The number required for a force sufficiently large to
deter cheating should not need to exceed a few hundred warheads on each side
– say, at most 500. Very possibly it would be far less. Two considerations
would determine the ultimate size and composition of the deterrent force: that
it deter attack with confidence, and that any undetected or sudden violation
of arms control treaties would not imperil this deterrence. The policing of an
arms agreement that restricted each side to a small number of warheads is
quite feasible with present verification technology. With tactical nuclear forces
to be eliminated entirely and the strategic forces having 500 or fewer warheads,
the present inventory of 50,000 weapons could be cut to no more than 1000.
(Before such limited-force goals could be reached, other nuclear powers — China, France, Great Britain and possibly others — will have to be involved in the process of reducing nuclear arsenals lest their weapons disturb the strategic equilibrium.)

Several themes should govern our attitudes and policies as we move through these negotiations towards our long-term objectives. Each side must recognize that neither will permit the other to achieve a meaningful superiority. Attempts to gain such an advantage are not only futile, but dangerous. The forces pushing each side in the direction of a first-strike posture — whether real or perceived — must be reversed. A stable balance at the lowest possible level should be the goal. We must allay legitimate fears on both sides: Soviet fear of our technology, and our fear of their obsessive secrecy. These apprehensions provide an opportunity for a bargain: Soviet acceptance of more intrusive verification, in return for American constraints on applications of its technological innovation. Our technological edge should be exploited vigorously to enhance our security, but in a manner that does not threaten the stability of deterrence. Penetration of Soviet secrecy is to our mutual advantage, even if the Kremlin does not yet understand that. So is technological restraint, even though it runs against the American grain. We have reached the present dangerous and absurd confrontation by a long series of steps, many of which seemed rational at the time. Step-by-step, we can undo much of the damage.

The arms negotiations now underway, and in particular the discussions begun at Reykjavik, represent an historic opportunity to change course and to take the first steps towards the long-term goals which I have proposed. We can lay the foundations for entering the twenty-first century with a totally different nuclear strategy, one of mutual security instead of war-fighting; with vastly smaller nuclear forces; and with a dramatically lower risk that our civilization will be destroyed.

B WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

I will take the first four questions together. Here we are dealing with the proposal of Mikhail Gorbachev that the United States and the Soviet Union should begin a phased transition aimed at achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2000.

Many — I would say most — United States military and civilian officials, as well as European leaders, hold the view that nuclear weapons are a necessary deterrent to Soviet aggression with conventional forces. Thus these individuals do not favour a world without nuclear weapons. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security advisor, said of Gorbachev's proposal, 'It is a plan for making the world safe for conventional warfare. I am therefore not enthusiastic about it.' Other Western officials have responded to Gorbachev by suggesting that nuclear disarmament would not be desirable without dramatic changes in the superpower relationship, including the correction of the con-
v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely?

OR Do the years before 1914 show what happens when military planning and the arms race control political choices? Do present strategies make nuclear war almost inevitable under likely future conditions? Is global nuclear disarmament the only rational policy?

The parallel with 1914 is compelling. In 1962 President Kennedy insisted that each member of the National Security Council read Barbara Tuchman’s *The Guns of August*. The book is the story of how the nations of Europe inadvertently blundered into World War I. President Kennedy reminded us of the 1914 conversation between two German chancellors on the origins of that war. One asked, ‘How did it happen?’ and his successor replied, ‘Ah, if we only knew.’ It was Kennedy’s way of stressing the constant danger of miscalculation. Three recent events – the Soviet shoot-down of Korean Air-Lines Flight 007, leading to the death of 269 civilians; the explosion of the US space shuttle, Challenger; and the nuclear reactor accident at Chernobyl – serve to remind us all how often we are the victims of misinformation, mistaken judgements and human fallibility.
B NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? Or Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

During the twenty-five years I have been watching the scene, I think that we in the West, and particularly the United States, have over and over again overestimated the Soviet conventional force strength, underestimated the NATO conventional force strength, and thereby exaggerated the imbalance of forces between them. Secondly, when judging the strategic impact of an existing imbalance of forces, we fail to recognize that an attacker requires something of the order of a three-to-one advantage in conventional forces to have a high confidence of success in an attack. And, finally, we frequently do not understand that the Soviet Union feels that a portion of its force may be unreliable, and/or be required to maintain order in the East. If we put all these points together, the imbalance of force today is far less than it is perceived to be by many in the West. And it is certainly within our power to correct it within realistic political and financial constraints.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power or Is the Soviet Union an encircled and which will take advantage of unilateral Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control agreements by Western determination and strength? threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?

I do not know what Soviet intentions are, but I am sure that Western objectives can best be served through a process of 'sustained engagement' that will increase markedly all areas of contact with the East. Our agenda should be far more comprehensive than hitherto attempted. Narrow approaches focusing primarily on one or another functional aspect of the relationship— for example, arms control— are not enough. The dialogue needs to be broad-based, multi-faceted, and continuous. The relationship must rest on the twin pillars of firmness and flexibility. It is abundantly clear that both of these elements are essential if our policies are to command public support and have a chance of succeeding. There is not a contradiction here: détente without defence would amount to surrender on the instalment plan; defence without détente would increase tensions and the risk of conflict. The two are mutually reinforcing.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? Or Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

Most Americans are simply unaware that NATO strategy calls for early initiation of the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict with the Soviets. Eighty percent of them believe we would not use such weapons unless the Soviets used them first. They would be shocked to learn they are mistaken. And they
would be horrified to be told that senior military commanders themselves believe that to carry out our present strategy would lead to the destruction of our society. But those are the facts.

If there is a case for NATO retaining its present strategy, that case must rest on the strategy's contribution to the deterrence of Soviet aggression being worth the risk of nuclear war in the event of deterrence failing. But there are two problems which stand in the way here. First, since the assumption is made that NATO will be responding to a Warsaw Pact invasion of Western Europe, and since the artillery has short range, the nuclear explosions would occur on NATO's own territory. Second, there is no reason to believe that the Warsaw Pact, now possessing tactical and intermediate-range nuclear forces at least comparable to those of NATO, would not respond to NATO's initiation of nuclear war with major nuclear attacks of its own. These attacks would probably seek most importantly to reduce NATO's ability to fight nuclear war by destroying command and control facilities; nuclear weapons storage sites; and the aircraft, missiles, and artillery that would deliver NATO's nuclear weapons. Thus the war would escalate from the battlefield to the rest of Western Europe (and probably to Eastern Europe as well, as NATO retaliated). So, as more and more Western political and military leaders recognize and publicly avow that the use of nuclear weapons would bring greater destruction to NATO than any conceivable contribution they might make to NATO's defence, there is less and less likelihood that NATO would authorize the use of any nuclear weapons except in response to a Soviet nuclear attack. As this diminishing prospect becomes more and more widely perceived — and it will — whatever deterrent value still resides in NATO's nuclear strategy will diminish still further. One cannot build a credible deterrent on an incredible action. And there are additional factors to be considered. Whether it contributes to deterrence or not, NATO's threat of first use is not without its costs. It is a most contentious policy, leading to divisive debates both within individual nations and between members of the Alliance, it reduces NATO's preparedness for conventional war, and, as I have indicated, it increases the risk of nuclear war.

So the costs of whatever deterrent value remains in NATO's nuclear strategy are substantial. Could not equivalent deterrence be achieved at lesser 'cost'? I believe the answer is yes. Compared to the huge risks which the Alliance now runs by relying on increasingly less credible nuclear threats, recent studies have pointed to ways by which the conventional forces may be strengthened at modest military, political, and economic cost. This would be in line with what was envisaged when flexible response first became NATO's official doctrine, while I was Secretary of Defense, nearly twenty years ago. The potential of any one of several proposals for increasing the strength of conventional forces, within reasonable financial constraints, is great. Unfortunately, not one of them has yet been accepted by any NATO nation for incorporation in its force structure and defence budget. NATO has not done so, because
there is today no consensus among its military and civilian leaders on the military role of nuclear weapons. Once the bankruptcy of a nuclear war-fighting strategy is generally recognized and acknowledged, we can then set about substituting realistic and effective alternatives.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing?

It is the asymmetry of forces that makes arms control agreements designed to increase the stability of deterrence so difficult. But we should recognize, first, that there is rough overall parity today, and, secondly, that the width of the band of parity is sufficiently great to accommodate existing asymmetries and allow agreements which can bring about crisis stability. In 1962, for example, when we had roughly 5000 strategic nuclear warheads and the Soviet Union had 300, we were nevertheless deterred from using our weapons in a first strike, because we feared the damage that surviving Soviet warheads would do. It did not matter to us at the time whether we had an advantage of 17 to 1, 5 to 1, or 2 to 1 – or even if they had an advantage of 2 to 1. That tells you that the width of the band of parity is very great. And that points to the great flexibility that there is in terms of arms control agreements.

(v) Are NATO ‘forward defence’ and ‘deep strike’ strategies essential for effective deterrence? OR Should NATO exploit her lead in ‘emerging technology’ to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

This has been answered under (iii). We should consider the types of conventional forces recommended by General Rogers, Professor William Kaufmann, The European Security Study, and others.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported?

OR Is domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

What is critical to Western Europe’s security is the recognition by the Soviet Union that the US is committed to its defence. So the participation of US troops within NATO on the soil of Europe seems to me to be a major element in deterrence. On the other hand, as I have said, I do not think that tactical or intermediate nuclear forces contribute to European security, nor that Western Europe would want US strategic nuclear forces to be used in her defence.

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2. A study paper prepared in 1982 by Western defence experts, aiming, amongst other things, to assess the scope for harnessing new technology to NATO strategy.
(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences? 

Having identified our goal, how can we move towards it? Some of our new policies would depend solely on the United States and its Allies; others would require Soviet cooperation. Within this context there is, therefore, room for particular unilateral nuclear initiatives, such as a further unilateral reduction in the numbers of tactical nuclear weapons deployed by NATO. But unilateral nuclear disarmament would be disastrous, and the main objective must be to secure multilateral agreement for policies which are clearly in the long-term interest of all parties. We should move quickly to refocus the arms control negotiations to accomplish what we cannot do by unilateral action alone. We can begin that process through the arms negotiations now underway.

In sum, to reduce the risk of blundering into disaster, I propose we adopt the view that the military role of nuclear weapons is limited to deterrence of one's opponent's use of such weapons, and that we move as rapidly as an Alliance consensus can be formed – it is likely to evolve gradually over the next five or ten years – to base all our military plans, our defence budgets, our weapons development and deployment programmes, and our arms negotiations, on that proposition. I realize that I am proposing a radical change in attitude towards NATO's present nuclear strategy. And I realize, too, that attitudes will not change quickly. They are based both on deep-seated feelings of mistrust of the Soviet Union and on misperceptions of how nuclear weapons can protect us against Soviet aggression. But through public debate, a debate in which citizens throughout the NATO countries – the potential victims of nuclear war – have both the capability and the responsibility to participate, we can reduce the risk of catastrophe by establishing long-term objectives that will underlie and shape all aspects of our nuclear programmes. That must be our goal.

C British Policy

This is a matter for the British people to decide. I want to make no comment.

Moral Considerations

It is a mistake to think that we can initiate the use of nuclear weapons without the process ending in the destruction of our societies. And therefore I believe that it is morally wrong ever to initiate the use of nuclear weapons. I say that without any qualification.
But it is also a mistake to think that we can eliminate the possibility of nuclear weapons. So, for the foreseeable future, minimum nuclear forces are necessary to deter any power or group from thinking that they can gain advantage by using, or threatening to use, nuclear weapons. I do not consider the deployment of such forces to be immoral, because there could be no deterrence without the intent to respond shown by deployment. Nor do I think that this is an un-Christian policy.

Selected Recommendations

1. I am not opposed to a freeze, if it contributes to rather than stands in the way of the kind of programme I have outlined.
2. No. Research programmes should continue.
3. I am not opposed to it. But nor would I be opposed to continuing tests, if this were part of a programme directed towards long-term stability. The important thing is the strategic objective.
4. What is crucial is not a declaration of no first use, but a radical shift of strategy away from dependence upon the use of nuclear weapons (see B(iii)).
5. Yes, if these are steps in the build-down of nuclear arsenals as described in A2(A)(vii).
6. A European nuclear weapon-free zone does not mean very much, although I am not opposed to it.
7. Yes.
8. No (see A2(B)).
9. Minimum forces should be retained indefinitely as outlined in A2(A)(vii).
10. See No. 2.
11. See No. 4.
12. See my answer to B(vii).
13. No comment.
14. No. Such action should not be undertaken other than in agreement with our Allies and the Soviet Union.
15. See No. 6.
Biographical Note

Born in 1925, James O'Connell has been Professor and Head of the Department of Government at Ahmadu Bello University, and Associate Professor of Politics at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Between 1976 and 1978 he was Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Ulster College, Northern Ireland Polytechnic. He has been Visiting Professor of Politics at Warwick University,
and Visiting Professor at Columbia University, New York. Since 1978 he has been the Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University.

Editorial Comment

The answers recorded here were communicated in an interview in Bradford on July 21, 1986. Professor O'Connell is able to draw, not only upon his own work, but upon that of the other members of his department, and of the students whose research he supervises. This response, therefore, represents the thinking within the only university department in the country to be funded specifically for Peace Studies, that is to say for the study of all the ways in which just and peaceful relationships can be created and preserved between groups and nations. The reader may be interested in such conclusions as those that are drawn about the present conventional and nuclear balance between East and West (B(i) and B(iv)), about the scope for alternative strategies for NATO (B(v)), and about the impact of Britain's nuclear weapons programme on the defence budget (CI(iv) and CI(vi)). A central critique of current nuclear deterrent policies can be found in such answers as those under A2(A)(i) and A2(A)(ii), and a suggested remedy under A2(A)(vii) and B(vii).

PROFESSOR JAMES O'CONNELL

A Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?

It is not possible to be categorical on this issue. It is probable that nuclear deterrence has been one of the restraining factors, but there have been others. For one thing, the countries of Western Europe have grown together politically and economically since 1945. This new-formed unity has removed a major source of instability from an area that has fought two major civil wars in this century. The creation of the European Economic Community owed little or nothing to nuclear deterrence. An indication of this fact is that Britain, which both possessed nuclear weapons and was more sensitive than most countries to a policy of deterrence, refused to join the Community in 1958 when it was formed. Furthermore, there has been no issue that would have led the great powers to accept anything like the costs of war, even as those costs were in 1939–45.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?

OR Has it mainly been other factors?

OR Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?
It has manifestly been the case that the two superpowers have fought one another in a series of proxy engagements, notably in Indo-China, Africa and Afghanistan. Mutual possession of nuclear weapons has not prevented war. It may have restrained the superpowers from fighting one another directly, but their confrontation has helped to inflame rather than resolve regional conflicts. Moreover, the political immobilisation of the superpowers in their obsession with preventing one another from gaining political advantage has impeded their co-operating where they might have worked together to end regional conflicts. Finally, it seems worth saying that, in a world that is essentially multi-polar, the East-West divide has created an artificial bi-polarity.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has ‘flexible response’ dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

I think that at tactical, intermediate, and strategic, levels there has been a trend within the military establishment to plan for nuclear war-fighting – and therefore for military superiority – even though the declaratory policy is one of deterrence through Mutual Assured Destruction. Indeed, the purpose of flexible response itself, when it was first thought out in the late 1950s and 1960s, was in a sense to restore the military superiority that the United States had grown used to and was reluctant to lose. Limited nuclear options may by and large increase the risk of nuclear conflict rather than decrease it. But I would not say that this is so much the result of a ‘lowering of the nuclear threshold’ (few now believe that a limited nuclear war could be contained) as of increasing the risk of inadvertent war. The danger is that fragile command and control structures will break down in the course of a mishandled crisis, in which, rather as in 1914, one power is impelled to strike first for fear that it will lose most if the other instead strikes first.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

There is undoubtedly a great superfluity of nuclear weapons systems. The main reasons why this is dangerous are, first, that it increases the possibility of accidental warfare. Second, it is part of a process in which each side is perceived as moving towards a first strike position. Third, it creates a political climate which is dangerous because it increases tension and mistrust. For example, the debate in the 1970s in the United States about the ‘window of vulnerability’ influenced American political perceptions about the Soviet Union in ways which helped to create the dangerous mutual antagonism of the 1980s.
Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it?

Insofar as there has been a measure of stability, it has not been a result of quantitative, or even of qualitative balance, in the sense of an equating of nuclear forces, but simply of the fact that each side has been able to damage the other beyond any acceptable level. 'Arms control', in the sense of a search for an agreement on parity, has not limited the growth of nuclear arsenals. Also, arms control negotiations have at times been little more than political gestures aimed to placate domestic opposition to nuclear weapons programmes. At the most, arms control agreements have edged arms growth in certain directions, but only within the constraints of the technology that was foreseen at the time. In any case, it seems to me that far too much is usually made of arms control negotiations. They cannot possibly carry the weight of public hopes for nuclear disarmament that is often placed on them. They are simply a narrow interface between the superpowers. What is important is the general political relationship between the superpowers from which arms control negotiations will emanate.

Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking?

I think that there has been a dialectical relationship between the technology, and strategic thinking and politics. On the one hand, I think that the basic decisions are still political. But, on the other hand, given that a weapons-system will take something like fifteen to twenty years to produce, if an American President or a Soviet Head of Government has it put to him by his military experts that the other is preparing a new weapons-system, then it is very difficult for him not to invest in similar preparations. The implication is that one must look a generation ahead in national security. To that extent there is a sense in which strategic thinking is technology-driven. But, in the last resort, there is still political control. Problems of political control over the weapons could, however, become problematic in a crisis, or in a limited nuclear conflict, because command-and-control capacities are fragile and inadequate on each side.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(a) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future?

The whole trend in the evolution of nuclear arsenals is now clearly towards
counterforce first-strike weapons—highly accurate ballistic and cruise systems. It still remains irrational for either side to launch a first strike from cold. But that is not so much where the risks lie. The great danger is that, in a situation of deep crisis, political leaders will be told by their military advisers that they must go first, because, if they do not, the other almost certainly will. It is unlikely that a nuclear power will deliberately strike first in the near future. But such action—to answer your question literally—is sadly not inconceivable. Existing command-and-control systems are exceedingly fragile and vulnerable. I also worry about the efficiency of Soviet computers in the event of a move towards 'launch-on-warning' policies as well as about the human factor on both sides. Let me add one further observation here: I think that as you go around with your questionnaire you will find two differing emphases in the replies that you will get. Those who favour nuclear weapons will insist on the stability that they bring. Those who are more uneasy about them or who are frankly hostile to them will emphasize the danger of the present complicated balance of terror. It seems to me that a crucial unifying theme should be that we had best use existing stability to move on towards greater political and military stability, which reduces present nuclear weapons to much smaller numbers, and to exercise control over the present unregulated arms race, in which the superpowers mirror one another in their distrust and in their profligate use of resources. In other words, we need to remain exceedingly sensitive to the existing danger. And, if we accept that there is a certain stability, we need to set out to build on it and to transform it and not just permit ourselves to hope that it will endure indefinitely.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and OR Does the amount of information to be intelligence facilities likely to remain processed, pressure of time and fear of secure? preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

In a politically stable situation there is probably relatively little danger. Moreover, there is, I think, a tacit agreement on both sides to respect each other's command, control and communications facilities. But, once again, it is in times of crisis that the problems are likely to multiply. As increasingly sophisticated time-urgent weapons with short flight times—like Trident and Pershing II—become available, this puts greater strain on command and control systems which are in any case themselves becoming more and more elaborate. We need only imagine a situation in which nuclear forces, or even just conventional forces, are put on the alert, to realize how fragile and vulnerable command and control facilities are. This situation may get worse. As Sir Geoffrey Howe pointed out in his speech of last March, we could well end up with automated decision-making by both sides, because there will be no other way of dealing with the information processing problem.
(iii) **If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end limited once it had broken out a dangerous illusion?**

Our hope may be that, if there were a limited nuclear exchange, the immediate destruction and the panic among the civilian population would be such that the exchange would be halted short of general conflagration. It is certainly possible that there could be a limited nuclear war. But the pressures in the other direction would also be very great, and we just cannot tell what would be likely to happen.

(iv) **Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence?**

Here we reach the central difficulty in nuclear deterrent strategy. New generations of nuclear weapons are an attempt to convince your opponent that you would be mad enough to use them if they ignored your threat, and your own public that you are still sane. It is hard to see how this could be said to enhance deterrence. It is rather like Denis Healey’s ‘law of holes’ – if you are in a hole, the wise thing to do is to stop digging. As it is, I think that the situation is certainly more dangerous now than it was before, say, Pershing II was deployed – because of the combination of its accuracy and short flight time. The tendency of intermediate and tactical nuclear weapons towards greater accuracy and lower collateral damage – in other words, towards greater usability – contributes to lowering the nuclear threshold and to increasing the risk that it will be crossed. One of the further problems with Cruise is that, since it is a mobile weapon, you tend to put it out in the field in a crisis, and that sends a signal to your opponent which makes him think that you are likely to use it. It is the same with the SS20.

(v) **Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons?**

There are so many strands to this. First of all, few people believe that the more extravagant claims being made for SDI are technologically feasible. Apart from anything else, both the Soviet Union and the United States are at the same time developing the penetration aids and other devices to counter any defensive system that may be deployed. In addition, defence stimulates offence, so Strategic Defence is likely to trigger an acceleration in the arms race. But, even if it were to prove even partially effective, it is likely to be seen by the other side as part of a deliberate move towards a counter-force first strike capability – there is clearly much more chance of warding off an enemy’s attempt at retaliation with the remnant of his nuclear force than of coping with his entire arsenal. For this reason the threat of an effective or partially effective defence might encourage preemption before it is fully operational. A shield is as much a battle weapon as a sword. One of the most alarming aspects of the
whole thing is the way in which it is planned to be activated. There will no longer be any question of satellite information of a Soviet launch being checked by a second set of sensors, such as radar. Defences have to be triggered within, say forty seconds. There is simply no time for human decision-making. If it is ever invented in its presently proposed form, it will be a system which commits a nation to war automatically.

(vi) Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

To be logical, supporters of nuclear deterrence should argue that 'horizontal' proliferation is a good thing. If nuclear weapons deter from war, then the more countries which have them the better. In fact, few do argue like this. There is an obvious connection between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' proliferation. The immobility of the two superpowers vis-à-vis one another has meant that they have taken less interest in policing proliferation than they should have. Moreover, they have certain commercial and industrial interests in facilitating the spread of technology which makes it possible for proliferation to be underpinned. This probably applies more especially to the Americans. I think that it is utterly crucial that both powers take the problem of proliferation seriously, especially as the technology simplifies. I cannot see the problems of proliferation being brought under control unless the global climate favours nuclear disarmament – and the lead has to come from the superpowers.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is 'arms-control' an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

I think that the current bilateral and multilateral talks need to be kept up. But, judging by the lack of success of the past forty years, there seems little hope that they will bear fruit. The only way in which multilateral agreement to phase down nuclear arsenals can be reached is by individual countries being prepared to make significant unilateral concessions. Multilateralism only works when unilateral initiatives by either alliances or individual countries are made. What we need from several countries is a continuing endeavour to reduce tensions and to build confidence between governments and between peoples. We need at a minimum to be driven by the thought that deterrence in its existing shape cannot hope to last indefinitely. More positively, we need to appreciate our common humanity, our new and marvellous productive technologies, and our longer term converging interests.
(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely? OR Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?

I do not think that war between the great powers could again become a rational option. Even conventional technology is now so dangerous, and the advantages that can be gained from war are obviously so few, that the abolition of nuclear weapons would not make war more likely.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war? OR Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?

It is unlikely that a conventional war, even between industrialized countries, would be nearly as disastrous as a nuclear war. But it would still be unacceptably damaging.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out? OR As with nerve gases in the last war, would there be no incentive to resort to capabilities which the other side has as well?

Did war break out, states would almost certainly consider a nuclear option. But it would still be as irrational and counter-productive as it is at present. What I think people must do is to live with the knowledge that these weapons can be put together again; and that they must so arrange disputes between nuclear-potential powers as to make it extremely unlikely that they would ever be tempted to put them together and use them.

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility? OR Is to argue that even multilateral nuclear disarmament is not desirable to give up all hope of a rational world-order?

I think that we have to accept the fact that some level of arms will always be necessary to maintain order. But what we do want to reach is a situation in the world in which relations between countries on a global scale will be like, if not those between the United States and Canada, then at least like those between the states of the European Economic Community. Under those circumstances there would be disputes, but it would be most unlikely that the countries would ever go to war. Effectively the whole world is as small in technological terms today as Europe was in 1939 – and we have to make political and other arrangements accordingly.
Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely? Or Do the years before 1914 show what happens when military planning and the arms race control political choices? Do present strategies make nuclear war almost inevitable under likely future conditions? Is global nuclear disarmament the only rational policy?

It seems to me that 1939 was only the second phase of a conflict that started in 1914, and that the two phases should not be separated. Today's situation is much more like 1914 than 1939. However, technological conditions are so different now from either 1914 or 1939 that people have to think in greatly different ways. As Einstein said — with the invention of atomic weapons, everything had changed except our ways of thinking.

2 NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? Or Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

There have been a number of major contributions in the literature recently, which show quite clearly that the Soviet Union does not have overwhelming conventional superiority. The two sides are relatively evenly matched. In fact, if you take account of the unreliability of some of the non-Soviet members of the Warsaw Pact, then, if anything, the advantage lies with NATO.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power which will take advantage of unilateral Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control agreements by Western determination and strength? Or Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?

By and large the Soviet Union sees itself as encircled and threatened, while the West sees it as expansionist. The problem is one of mutual perception. The acquisition of an Eastern European empire was partly an attempt to prevent another attack from Germany, partly a reflection of where armies ended up in 1945, partly a revival of old Tsarist ambitions, and partly the Soviet leaders' instincts for conquest and expansion. At the moment, while still hanging on to the shreds of ideological legitimacy, the USSR has lost its universalist confidence and feels somewhat under siege. It is the poorer of the two superpowers economically, and the more backward technologically. There is a good chance that under the present leadership it will reciprocate Western initiatives. It has already taken initiatives of its own, notably its curb on testing.
(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? or Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons is militarily unnecessary and strategically suicidal in that it might lead to a 'limited' nuclear war, which for Europe would be total. Psychologically it also undermines NATO conventional defences by encouraging a combination of defeatism and trust in early and compensatory nuclear expedients. Finally, both sides need to take more seriously negotiations on mutual and balanced reductions in conventional forces.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing? or Does the West initiate nearly all phases of the nuclear arms race and continue to enjoy a substantial lead in most areas? Is the nuclear 'overkill' such that the West could offer a nuclear 'freeze' or unconditional cuts without risk?

As I have said, I do not think that nuclear deterrence is stable. But there is a degree of overkill such that either side could make very generous concessions without affecting the level of risk. In terms of general military technology, the most recent Pentagon assessment says that the United States leads the Soviet Union in fourteen areas; they are equal in six; and the Soviet Union does not lead in any. It is also true that the United States has initiated most (but not all) of the phases of the nuclear arms race. There are certain areas where Soviet build-up has been disproportionate – particularly in certain classes of land-based ballistic missiles. But this is matched by American advantage in the other two arms of the strategic 'triad'. By and large there is a rough balance in capacity and a significant Western lead in technology.

(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence? or Should NATO exploit her lead in 'emerging technology' to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

Current offensive strategies – whether Soviet operational manoeuvres or Western deep strike postures – are both unnecessary and likely to be dangerously destabilizing in crisis. In addition, for political reasons, if confidence-building measures are to be undertaken, the arrangement of forces needs to be less provocative than it has traditionally been. In view of the present balance of forces, the West has the wealth, technology and reserve manpower to enable its forces confidently to explore alternative strategies. We should not, however, be tempted to place too much reliance on the technological 'fix' of Emerging Technologies. We should also be sceptical about the more extravagant claims of arms manufacturers.
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(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported?

OR Is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

In the immediate future, whether Europe is nuclear-free or not, it makes sense to keep American troops here because the NATO Alliance is not one that should be lightly unscrambled. Having said that, the crucial problem at the present moment is that Western Europe has not had an independent role but has simply lined up completely with one of the superpowers. What is important in the longer run is to make Europe nuclear-free; to re-work the Alliance in its present form; and to let European powers work out an independent common policy which stresses their friendship with the United States and their European kinship with the Soviet Union. I think that it would be unfortunate if Western Europe constituted itself a separate power bloc – as it were a third superpower alongside the other two. That would only continue the present set of strategies, while complicating them. I would certainly not see a reconstituted Western Europe arming itself with a nuclear capability.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

OR Are unilateral initiatives as part of a general programme of nuclear disarmament the only way to reverse the arms race? Is talk of ‘multilateral disarmament’ insincere in the mouths of those who reject all suggestion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a Nuclear Freeze, a European Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, or a declaration of No First Use?

There can be no doubt that the way ahead is for the West to be prepared to take significant initiatives – and to reciprocate those offered by the Soviet Union. In other words, to proceed by way of a series of carefully planned unilateral initiatives on both sides which are then consolidated by bilateral and multilateral treaties. Unilateralism of this kind is simply part of genuine multilateral disarmament. We now have plenty of evidence that the Soviet Union is ready to take part in such a process. What is the alternative? The question that people need to ask themselves is: ‘Are we happy for the present situation to continue indefinitely?’ Those who say ‘yes’ are genuine believers in indefinite nuclear deterrence. In which case they should be honest about it, and not, as so often happens, pose as ‘multilateral disarmers’. 
C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?

It seems to me that Britain has nuclear weapons because she was once an imperial power. They serve no military or strategic function. They cannot be used against a superpower — except possibly in the form of a final act of retaliation by some lonely submarine commander after Britain had already been destroyed. All that they do is encourage proliferation. Nobody, furthermore, has been able to sketch a plausible scenario of nuclear blackmail.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making?

The second centre argument suggests that Britain would be likely to use her nuclear weapons in defence of Germany when the Americans were not prepared to use theirs. This seems inconceivable. If the Americans pulled out, so would the British. The argument is an unconvincing rationalization. In any case, multiple centres of decision-making imply greater uncertainty; and uncertainty implies greater crisis instability, not stability. That argument needs to be met head on.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it?

My impression is that, if the British were in any way to threaten the Soviet Union, the Americans would very quickly extricate themselves from the resulting situation. They might well even move against British submarines and weapons did they come to believe that a British strike against a third power contained danger to American security. The funny thing about this kind of justification for British nuclear weapons is that, on the one hand, British governments argue that they must have them as part of solidarity with the United States, but they also argue that they need to have them when the United States no longer shows solidarity with them. And they have an in-between position, which I think is not even compatible with either, which is that they could threaten to use the weapons in such a way as to involve the Americans in the action. I think that the entire rationale is quite confused.
(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? OR Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

Recent studies show that, if in the next ten years Britain retains nuclear weapons, the cost will make severe inroads into British conventional weapons and will weaken British conventional defence. Moreover, this will happen all the more quickly as Britain runs into balance of payments crises with the failure of its manufacturing industry and the decline of the petroleum industry. I would prefer it if nuclear spending was cut out of the defence budget altogether and the rest of the defence budget did not go up. The trouble at the moment is that defence priorities have not been properly worked out. There is defence of the island, defence of the North-East Atlantic, out-of-area operations, the Falklands, the army on the Rhine, and nuclear strategy. These six undertakings have not been prioritized against one another nor properly costed. It seems to me that one could work out a realistic set of defence propositions that were much less expensive, even in conventional terms, than the present ones. So the saving made by abandoning Britain's nuclear forces would go to strategic economic investment, as well as into the health service and the educational system.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

Neither British nor French possession of nuclear weapons has given either a role of strategic counsel or a place 'at the top table'. If anything, West Germany has an ascendancy in Europe because of her economic strength. If British unilateral disarmament were part of the process described in B(vii), it would be a significant contribution. But this depends upon the nature of the Soviet response and what follows from it. British disarmament could have a significant restraining effect elsewhere, too. It would certainly not diminish British influence, and could well enhance it.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? OR Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

Trident has no strategic function for this country and is just a continuing form of proliferation. Its cost has helped to bring the public debate about British nuclear forces in general to a head. If Britain goes ahead with Trident, it will cut expenditure on new conventional equipment by at least thirty per cent during the late 1980s and severely damage army, air force and naval capabilities.
2. NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) **Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends?** Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance?  

It seems to me that it is time that Britain distanced herself from nuclear weapons in Europe, and worked out new political relations with the other European powers and with the United States. She should be thinking in terms of conventional strategies, working particularly with the Germans on alternative ways of strengthening non-provocative defences. The introduction of anti-tank barriers, the mobilisation of reserve manpower – there are any number of possibilities to be explored. For the time being we should stay in NATO. There is a case for reworking the Alliance rather than breaking it up.

(ii) **Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?**  

The Libyan raid has highlighted the question of sovereignty. Although the Prime Minister’s permission was given in that case, there can be no doubt that a British veto would be brushed aside in the event of a nuclear war which involved vital American interests. Apart from anything else, American law does not allow the US president to give control of American nuclear weapons to any non-national. The removal of American nuclear bases would in no way alter the strategic balance between the superpowers, or, even in terms of nuclear deterrent theory, make the ‘defence of the West impossible’. The bases play more of a political than a strategic military role.

(iii) **Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally?**  

Even if Britain ceased to be a nuclear power or to have American nuclear weapons here, the island would still no doubt be targeted. Both the Soviet Union and the United States almost certainly target neutral countries at the moment. But it would no longer be so certain that, when it came to it, the weapons would be used. What no country will escape will be the effects of a nuclear winter or radiation fall out. Moreover, Chernobyl must at least warn all of us what may happen once civil power stations are caught in the most limited nuclear exchange.
Professor James O'Connell

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US 'umbrella' than any other Western ally - or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

As I have said, I do not think that nuclear weapons have brought stability or protection in the first place. It has been political arrangements that have been the main basis for stability. There is obviously nothing that a middle-ranking power like Britain can do to prevent the superpowers from continuing to deploy their nuclear arsenals. In any case, 'nuclear umbrella' is only a misleading metaphor for a policy that suggests that the US would start a nuclear war to protect its allies. One needs to remember Dr Kissinger's warning that no country can be expected to commit suicide on behalf of another. The only truth in the 'nuclear umbrella' theory is that both superpowers are not likely to use nuclear weapons incautiously against any power belonging to its opponent's alliance. However, as Palmerston said, countries do not have permanent allies but only permanent interests.

Moral Considerations

(i) Is it morally right to pursue the policy least OR Are there actions which are in themselves likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong? OR Are there actions which are in themselves wrong no matter what the situation? Is the alternative to excuse almost any act of barbarism?

Under certain circumstances, which are usually difficult to spell out beforehand in any particular case, the most moral option may be to choose the lesser evil. Where one or the other of the evils is unavoidable, there may even be a moral obligation to choose the lesser. In this sense one may have to pursue a course of action that, in other circumstances, would be morally wrong. For example, I could conceive a moral use of tactical nuclear weapons against terrorists who had secured such weapons and were holding a population hostage. But one must retain a different sense of proportion in formulating policies that involve the destruction of entire populations by deliberate action.

(ii) In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies? OR Is the only relevant point here that a nuclear exchange of almost any kind would in itself cause unimaginable suffering to largely civilian populations?

There is a prudential dimension in Just War decisions. The crucial factor in this connection is the principle of proportionality, in which a government weighs the probable success and relative cost of war against alternative costs in, for example, threats to security, justice and freedom. It is, consequently, reasonable to weigh the implications of nuclear and non-nuclear policies. It is
not easy, however, to envisage a proportion between the evils of a nuclear war fought with strategic weapons, and other costs in lives and suffering. There is also the principle of discrimination in Just War theory. This principle is based on the acceptance of a common humanity, and argues that those not directly involved in combat should be spared destruction. Just War moralists accept that some collateral damage is inevitable in war. But any predictable form of strategic exchange between superpowers would involve destroying a large part of each other’s population. It is difficult to accept the morality of decisions that involve the destruction of more than a hundred million persons with no practical involvement in governmental decisions or war effort, or with no effective animosity towards supposed enemies. At most one might conceivably accept the destruction of a limited number of persons in actions that saved many more from being destroyed. But the latter choice seems implausible in the present state of weaponry and strategy. I do not envy political leaders those war decisions that might confront them. But I do not think that any decision to destroy millions of people could be moral under any circumstances that I have heard any strategist describe, or any circumstances that I can conceive of. For my own part – and to state a personal choice rather than put an option to government – I would rather have myself, my family and my people perish than have, in the name of their survival, our government decide the destruction of millions of persons with whom I share a God-given humanity and against whom I have no grievance.

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use? Is there no such thing as a fully deployed weapons system which is a bluff? Is to deploy nuclear weapons to intend to use them in certain circumstances?

I think that, once one undertakes the strategic and technical devices needed for nuclear deterrence, then there is implicit in this the intention to use them, if only because the operatives are so conditioned. While in theory one may separate deployment from use, effectively one cannot separate them. If one deploys them, one thereby accepts the possibility of using them.

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence? Is a conditional intention to cause indiscriminate and disproportionate suffering of this kind, whether admonitory, preemptive or retaliatory, ruled out by Just War theory? Was it wrong to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945?

Yet on the issue of deploying weapons in a theory of Just Deterrence I hesitate to be categorical. For one thing, the situation of fear and distrust between the superpowers is such that they may justly – if in the context of a distorted world – retain their weapons. Yet on any but a most limited scale I do not think that they could rationally or morally prepare to use their already deployed weapons.
It is in their interest as well as in the interest of the rest of us to move out of
the present impasse.

(v) *Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and world poverty and disease?* OR *Is it a scandal that such huge resources are devoted to the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and not to the alleviation of suffering?*

I think that there is a moral link between the development of nuclear weapons and world poverty, because, first of all, resources are being deployed in respect of these weapons that could go elsewhere. And, secondly, the confrontation diverts attention from the plight of the poorer nations of the world. The will to use nuclear weapons in a strategic exchange, and the existence of extensive and profound poverty in the world, seem to me two great scandals of our time.

(vi) *Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons?* OR *Does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?*

It seems to me that practically all the authoritative Christian groups that have looked at this problem have up to now accepted the deployment of nuclear weapons. To take a most comprehensive review by the American Catholic bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*, I think that there is an ambiguity at the heart of its teaching. It accepts the deployment of the weapons, but it effectively condemns their use. The ambivalence lies in the acceptance of a deployment that is inseparable from the intention to use. The bishops seek a way out of their moral dilemma – which they do not seem sufficiently to recognize – by insisting on a moral obligation to work for arms control and relative disarmament. Yet there is evidence to suggest that they and their followers – and the same is true of other Christian bodies – have not accepted this moral imperative in practical life and politics.

**Recommendations**

1 Broadly speaking, Yes.
2 Ideally, yes (see A2(A)(v)).
3 Yes.
4 Yes (see B(iii)).
5 Yes (see A1(iv)).
6 Yes (see B(vi)).
7 Yes (see A2(A)(vi)).
8 Not necessarily (see A2(B)).
9 Yes.
10 Yes.
11 Yes (see B(iii)).
12 Yes (see A2(A)(vii) & V(vii)).
13 Yes.
14 Yes.
15 Yes (see B(vi)).
16 Yes (see C1).
17 No (see C1(iv)).
18 Yes (see C2(i)).
19 Yes (see C2(i) & C2(ii)).
20 No.
Biographical Note

Born in 1938, David Owen qualified as a doctor at St Thomas' Hospital, where he was Neurological and Psychiatric Registrar between 1964 and 1966. He has been Member of Parliament for Plymouth (Sutton) between 1966 and 1974, and for Plymouth (Devonport) since 1974. For fifteen years he was a Labour
Member of Parliament serving as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs between 1977 and 1979. In 1981 he became a founder-member of the Social Democratic Party, and has been its leader since 1983.

Editorial Comment

Although Dr Owen was willing to contribute to this book, he was not able to give an interview, so, with his permission, the responses which follow have been selected and arranged by the editor from the sources cited at the beginning. Page references are provided throughout.

Readers will find a criticism of current nuclear deterrent policies in the East and in the West in Section A, and an equally tranchant criticism of unilateralist counter-proposals in Section B (see especially the answers to Questions (iii) and (vii)). His own proposals, as interpreted by the editor, are summarized in the Recommendations at the end. So far as concerns British policy, the broad emphasis is on the importance of creating a powerful independent Western European defence (see in particular the answer to question C1(ii), against the background of the answer to question B(vi)). Dr. Owen is critical, both of Conservative Party plans to press ahead with the Trident option (C1(iv) and C1(vi)), and with Labour Party proposals for a unilateral withdrawal from NATO's nuclear deterrent strategy (C2(i) and C2(ii)).

Rt. HON. DR DAVID OWEN

Key to References

1 Effective Deterrence (Lecture 1981).
3 A Total Test Ban (Speech 1984).
4 Europe's Nuclear Deterrence Strategy (Speech June 5, 1986).
5 Defence Debate (House of Commons June 30, 1986).
7 Why the Summit Succeeded (Times Oct. 16, 1986).
8 Plymouth Speech (Oct. 27, 1986).
9 What is to be Done? (Recommendations of the Palme Commission Oct 24-6, 1986).
10 Defence and Disarmament in Europe (SDP Policy Document No. 9, as amended June 1986).
A Global Policy

I The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?

Although a number of other factors have also contributed, there can be little doubt that, for forty years, nuclear deterrence has played a major role in helping to maintain an uneasy peace in Europe, and in preventing direct conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States world wide (4.2, 4.4).

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?

It has mainly been the mutual fear of nuclear devastation that has prevented war between the major powers (4.2). Peace has in the end rested on the deterrent value of a mutually assured second strike capability (3.11). This is what needs to be preserved (3.23).

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war?

We must distinguish here between deterrence and defence. Deterrence is to convince an enemy that the burdens and risks of any attack far outweigh any possible gains. Defence is to reduce the likely burdens and risks if an enemy attacks, deterrence having failed. Deterrence aims at changing the intentions of the enemy, making it less likely they will decide to act. Defence aims at reducing the effectiveness of the enemy if they decide to act. Defensive and deterrent strategies must therefore interlink. In the early days of nuclear arsenals, the weapons were so devastating, the consequences of their use so appalling, that it was possible to envisage a purely deterrent force. The concept was one of mutually assured destruction. Then, as the technology of nuclear warfare developed, with miniaturization of the warheads, multiple independently-targeted re-entry vehicles and pinpoint accuracy from 4000 miles, with nuclear mines, nuclear depth-charges and short-range battlefield nuclear weapons, some saw nuclear deterrence as being merged with conventional deterrence. Nuclear weapons began to be part of the arsenal of war (1.37–8). It is a fact that military strategists in both the Warsaw Pact and NATO believe that nuclear weapons would be used in any war in Europe and that both sides expect to win such a war (1.42). This has been a very dangerous development. To set nuclear weapons within a seamless robe of defence decision-making in this way is to increase massively the risk that nuclear weapons will be used
again (1.46). The battlefield nuclear war-fighting strategies of both East and West should be abandoned. Fortunately, a strong body of opinion on both sides, scientific, military and political, now recognizes this. And the main strategic argument for the original deployment of battlefield nuclear weapons no longer applies. The accuracy of new generations of longer-range weapons means that they could if necessary be used in a tactical role. So the abandonment of battlefield nuclear weapons does not mean that the option of a tactical battlefield response is foreclosed (1.43).

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

Effective deterrence between the superpowers depends, not upon war-fighting superiority, nor upon the acquisition of an all-embracing defensive capability against nuclear war, but upon an absolute confidence on both sides in the invulnerability of powerful second strike forces. This defines the minimum level of nuclear weapons that are needed as a deterrent. China, France, and the UK can live with a more limited degree of confidence in the invulnerability of their deterrent, nor do they need as much power to give them the ultimate protection they need against nuclear blackmail. The overall levels of nuclear megatonnage and warheads that such a minimum capability represents is minuscule in comparison to the present absurd levels (3.23). We will not prevent the disaster of a nuclear exchange if we allow the nuclear arms race to continue to spiral sharply upwards. To go on proliferating and expanding nuclear stockpiles is to head towards doomsday. Present policies of increasing megatonnage and warheads carry a far greater risk than the calculated risks of decreasing nuclear megatonnage and warheads (3.1, 3.24).

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

The idea of a stable overall nuclear balance has been an important one. But it is not a purely mechanistic matter, nor just an arithmetical missile count; it should be a rounded assessment of overall capability that embraces conventional weapons and even involves general economic and political factors (1.43). Within this context, arms control negotiations have been significant, but can hardly be said to have been successful. In order to control and reverse the arms race, it is necessary first to understand the mechanisms that drive it. The psychology and the politics of arms control are every bit as important as the technology and science (3.5).
The political, social and economic decisions that drive the arms race need to be understood in terms of human behaviour, of how political leaders and nations see each other, their motives, jealousies and pride. Above all, how feelings of national insecurity fed by military, scientific and industrial lobbying in democratic and communist systems, constantly undermine international security (3.5). Force planning has in the past been influenced too often by the military's wish always to have a comprehensive range of weaponry (1.43), while, for example, a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has been opposed by US and UK scientists working in cahoots because they sensed their jobs were threatened (3.14).

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future?

The prospect of a deliberate all-out first strike by either side remains a very remote one so long as each continues to believe that it has a potent and invulnerable second strike capability (3.11).

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure?

There are areas for concern here. The battlefield nuclear war-fighting strategies of both East and West, for example, are associated with acute command and control problems (1.43), while SDI could bring forward highly automated systems, even with a launch-on-warning response (4.21).

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end hostilities swiftly?

There are two dangerous misconceptions, which have done much to stimulate concern about nuclear deterrence. Firstly, the folly of stressing the significance of measures to protect civilian populations against thermo-nuclear war. Governments must do something to protect their citizens, but to pretend that civil defence can add to the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons is an absurdity; and to pretend that it is anything more than a palliative for the population is a cruel deception. Secondly, the folly of planning for a nuclear war-fighting strategy. Governments must plan for limiting nuclear war if, by inadvertence
or design, nuclear weapons are even used, but loose talk of limited nuclear war has always been a contradiction in terms (4.2).

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence? OR Do new battlefield and theatre weapons threaten a dangerous lowering of the nuclear threshold?

The predominant European motivation behind the 1979 theatre modernization decision was to lock the United States into deploying a new generation of ground launched nuclear missiles in Europe. President Carter’s Administration did not think it was necessary to deploy a new generation of theatre nuclear weapons and were content to rely on strategic missiles, although in the end the Americans went along with the dominant wish of the Europeans (4.13). The effectiveness of the NATO deterrent, as of the Warsaw Pact deterrent, depends critically on its conventional component first, and secondly on its having an invulnerable second strike nuclear offensive component. If both these components can be assured, then the whole range of intermediate nuclear weapons could be negotiated away (1.45). In the meantime, the danger of the forward deployment of battlefield nuclear weapons, with its ‘lose or use’ dilemma, is now generally conceded (4.16).

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? OR Is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in t?

President Reagan’s 1983 Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) was announced by the United States Administration with no warning or prior consultation. Out of the blue, President Reagan decided to call in question, not just the value of deterrence, but its very morality. No wonder that a stunned Europe responded with widespread scepticism and not a little disguised anger. Whatever happens over deployment, SDI is triggering off a highly expensive new arms race, without providing invulnerable defence, nor obviously enhancing deterrence. It has so far damaged arms control prospects, and, as we have seen, could bring forward highly automated systems, even with a ‘launch-on-warning’ response (4.19-21). The philosophical case for the ABM Treaty, accepted by President Nixon and all his successors was that to attempt defensive invulnerability for all one’s territory, as distinct from one’s second strike installations or command and control centres, was to dangerously feed the arms race. The Strategic Defence Initiative opens up the same philosophical issue. If one attempts a comprehensive defence in space against all intercontinental nuclear missiles, most of which are part of a second strike system, it will just produce another twist in the arms race, this time in space, not just on earth (3.13).

(vi) Is the threat of ‘horizontal’ nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?
Sceptics say that concern over proliferation is exaggerated. Contrary to many pessimistic predictions, there are still only five declared nuclear weapon states. But all is not as it seems. Israel and probably South Africa are to all intents and purposes already nuclear weapon states. India’s explosion of a nuclear device in 1974 puts pressure on Pakistan, which would in turn stimulate Iraq and Libya. In Latin America, Brazil and Argentina have modest nuclear weapons programmes underway. Article VI of the Non Proliferation Treaty, signed in 1968 and entering into force in 1970, put an obligation on nuclear weapon states to enter into good faith negotiations on effective arms control and disarmament. The only conceivable way of stopping clandestine proliferation is within the context of a changed international climate, with obvious moves from the nuclear weapon states to stop testing and to curb the arms race (3.6–10).

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is ‘arms-control’ an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

The Reykjavik summit marks, not the end of serious arms control negotiations, but the beginning. I cannot understand why there is so much pessimism from sensible people about the outcome. All the ingredients are now present for a major arms deal, and I am confident it will happen. In Iceland, Mr Reagan and Mr Gorbachev took the sort of risks that distinguish the bureaucrat from the political leader (7). If the remaining three years of the 1980s repeat the first seven years of the decade, there will be no substantial agreement to control or reduce arms – but accelerating deployments of new and more dangerous weapons. Yet a basis has been laid for extraordinary progress. An opportunity exists for the 1980s to witness what only recently seemed to be a dream, but which now can become real: concrete accomplishments in disarmament, stability and peace. (9.8).

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely?

If there were global nuclear disarmament while current conventional forces remain intact, Western Europe would be exposed to the undoubted Soviet conventional superiority (1.41). This would clearly be dangerous. Global nuclear disarmament can only be realistically discussed against a background of political-military detente of the kind recommended by the Palme Commission (2.xv).

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war? OR Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?
We should not forget Field Marshal Lord Carver's warning about believing that conventional warfare is a comparatively harmless affair – one reason why some West German strategists accept even the risks of NATO's current tactical nuclear weapon strategy for their territory (1.40). As we recoil from the horror of nuclear war and the moral ambivalence surrounding nuclear deterrence, we should not let fading memories of the Second World War allow younger generations to forget that fifteen million in the Armed Services and between twenty-six and thirty-four million civilians, including six million Jews, lost their lives during that war. A new conventional war would be even more devastating to life and limb. Modern weapons have far greater destructive power, as experience in Vietnam and in the various Arab-Israeli were demonstrated (4.2).

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out?

We should remember the fate of the Baruch Plan in 1946. In seeking a world without nuclear weapons the plan was never able to overcome the fatal flaw which was the penalty of the Hiroshima explosion. Even if the US destroyed their atomic weapons everyone knew they would still retain knowledge of how to construct a bomb. The Soviet Union not unreasonably feared that the US could quickly reconstruct a bomb if political or military relations deteriorated (3.3).

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility? OR Is to argue that even multilateral nuclear disarmament is not desirable to give up all hope of a rational world-order?

We share the urgent wish for greater progress towards the ultimate aim of general and complete disarmament (2.xv). But this can only be achieved as part of a much wider reordering of the world community along the lines recommended in the Report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, chaired by Olof Palme.

B NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? OR Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

The Soviet Union has had conventional superiority in Europe since 1945. Although, somewhat surprisingly, both the US and Canada have continued to base forward forces in Europe, it has not been in such numbers that they can be described as anything more than a crucial contribution to a conventional delaying force, not by any stretch of the imagination a conventional holding

1. See Note on p. 242
force. The Warsaw Pact forces, on the other hand, are clearly strong enough to sustain a NATO conventional attack (1.40).

If you talk to the NATO military commanders, the number one anxiety is ammunition stocks and the capacity to reinforce (6.18).

(ii) *Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power* or *Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?*

Some non-nuclear strategists sidestep arguments over Western conventional forces by saying that the Soviet Union has no intention of crossing the by now agreed East/West frontier in Europe; that Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the threat of invasion to Poland in 1980–81 was within their own direct sphere of influence; that even Afghanistan was in the grey area of Soviet influence and not comparable in any way to an attack on Western Europe. Honest unilateralists find such rationalizations no substitute for a strong conventional defence strategy (1.41). We must not forget the crunching of freedom on the other side of the East-West divide since the end of the war. The memory of the Berlin airlift, the unrest in East Germany, and the Berlin wall must not be erased by time. Nor can we grow deaf to the cries for help that we could only listen to impotently from Hungary in 1956, and from Czechoslovakia in 1968, and, more recently, from Solidarity in Poland. Recent history reminds us that we cannot take our present stability for granted. As Europeans, we know all too well the potential power and influence of the Soviet Union. Though the USSR is a European country in part, as it has grown to be a superpower, so has it become an alien force in a Europe of medium-sized and small countries (4.4–5).

(iii) *Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons?* or *Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?*

It is the acknowledged imbalance of conventional forces which has meant that the United States, France and Britain have never been prepared to sign a ‘no first use’ nuclear weapons agreement. We are not confident that our conventional defence can stop a Warsaw Pact attack and we have felt it necessary to say that, if attacked in overwhelming numbers, we reserve the right to threaten the first use of nuclear weapons against a Warsaw Pact which has nuclear weapons (1.40). NATO countries also believe that, despite the Soviets’ public position that they would not use nuclear weapons first, the Soviet Union nevertheless plans and exercises on the basis of the first use of nuclear weapons (2.xvi). It is an awesome reality that, as a result, Britain is one of many countries committed to the illusion of a limited battlefield nuclear war-fighting strat-
There should be an urgent reassessment of that strategy in both NATO and Warsaw Pact countries (2.xvi). But this can only be achieved if the central problem of the conventional imbalance is tackled at the same time, by negotiating a reduction in Warsaw Pact conventional forces, and a strengthening where necessary of Western conventional capabilities. This is something that few non-nuclear strategists are prepared to face up to, and, until they do, their non-nuclear strategy lacks all credibility (1.40).

More significant than a premature declaration of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons would be the creation, step by step, of a functional battlefield nuclear weapon-free corridor, eventually reaching 150 kilometres either side of the East-West frontier. The significance of this proposal is that it tackles, at the root, the very doctrine of limited nuclear war. By removing the weapons, it reduces substantially the chance of the early use of nuclear weapons and the likelihood of a conventional attack immediately triggering the first use of nuclear weapons. No longer could nuclear weapon installations twenty kilometres from the border be overrun within hours of a conventional attack. It deliberately makes it harder to progress from conventional war to nuclear war. In this sense it demands a radical change in the conventional military wisdom that sees a seamless robe of escalation running across conventional and nuclear strategies (2.xvii).

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear or Does the West initiate nearly all phases of arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and nuclear arms race and continue to enjoy strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing?

What is essential to effective deterrence is mutual confidence in the invulnerability of powerful second strike nuclear forces. We should not believe that there has to be a matching, at every level and in every area, of every Soviet weapon system or strategy (4.3). In particular, a specifically Euro-strategic balance has never been necessary if there is a stable overall nuclear balance (1.43). To recognize this means adopting a political judgement about military sufficiency and rejecting the military wish for superiority. It means recognizing that such a wider judgement of the national and international good is bound to be easier with a democratic government than a totalitarian government and that is why the United States must not match every Soviet folly. It is a sign of immaturity, not virility, every time the Soviet military impose a new twist in the arms race for the Americans to respond. The military are part of the Soviet government's political decision-making. We should not be surprised in the West if the dynamics for the arms race appear stronger in the USSR at times. It should be the strength of our democracies that we do not feel bound to follow them blindly. We must be sufficiently skilled to de-escalate the arms race while preserving our security (3.12).
Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence?  

If dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons could be removed, and a reasonable conventional balance achieved, we should be able to agree a US-European conventional fighting strategy on the Central Front fairly easily (4.14).

If we go for the so-called 'smart' bombs and new technology, there is no doubt that we will be beginning to develop the conventional capacity to stop the Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces massing, which at the moment is said to require tactical nuclear weapons. But there is a considerable price-tag on this (6.19).

Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported?

The security of the West will continue to depend upon the presence of US troops in Europe, and on the potency of the US retaliatory nuclear second strike capability. But American perceptions have to be married with the differing perceptions of their European partners. The Alliance no longer gives the United States automatic authority; something President Carter understood and President Reagan initially did not understand (1.44). Nor can we assume in perpetuity that senators and congressmen will still be able to persuade United States voters and taxpayers to fund 300,000 members of the United States Armed Forces on the mainland of Europe (5.735). So, to help check the influence and pressure of the Soviet superpower, it has always been inevitable that a force would emerge from under the shadow of the United States that was fundamentally European in outlook and in interest. As nuclear weapons became more controversial within European politics, so the need to develop an inner European core within NATO to influence US nuclear strategy became urgent. What has been crucial for European security in the past is that at least two of three countries – Germany, France and the UK – have been bound together by relations of trust and intimacy. What cannot be gainsaid is that if there could be a tripod of Franco-German-Anglo understanding instead of a mere bipod, the so-called European pillar within NATO would be immensely strengthened. This must include a nuclear component, because the present imbalance in NATO is essentially because of the United States dominance over nuclear strategy (4.5–7). Would this not be a more effective way of standing up to the United States when we dislike their strategy on nuclear arms control? Would not Europe be in a much firmer and clearer position when arguing for maintaining SALT 2 limits if it also had its own worked-out view on NATO’s nuclear strategy? Would not the partnership be
more equal if, instead of the United States speaking separately to the French, Germans, Italians and British, it could feel that there was an underlying cohesion on nuclear strategic matters among the main European partners? That is the logical development (5.740).

But I am not postulating a European deterrent on the basis of replacing or excluding the United States, and the United States should certainly not be encouraged to withdraw. I would do everything in my power to hold the United States to the concept of the Atlantic Alliance for as long as humanly possible. If, as I hope, its forces remain for twenty, thirty or forty years, history will show that one of the reasons why they did stay was because there was a more equitable balance in the defence commitment to NATO by the European partners and the United States (5.737).

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

For Western unilateralists to give up the ability to threaten a second strike nuclear response in the face of a nuclear-armed Soviet Union is a decision of quite awesome dimensions. It goes against all past experience of how political leaders or nations actually act (1.41). The first nuclear arms race, it is worth recalling, was not between the Soviet Union and the United States, but was between Nazi Germany and the Allies. Those who in the Western democracies now challenge our possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent, while the Soviet Union has theirs, should ask themselves what would have happened if Hitler's scientists had been able to test a nuclear bomb before Hitler had taken his life on 30 April 1945? Can anyone doubt it would have been a very different world? (3.1). No sane person can be content to live in a world where peace between the great powers is preserved mainly through the mutual fear of nuclear devastation. Yet no sane person can allow their emotions to suspend their reason. We may instinctively want to stop our nuclear world and get off, but we know we cannot. Nuclear weapons exist. They cannot disappear or be wished away. The task is, painstakingly, to negotiate them away (4.2).

C British Policy

1 The British Deterrent

We are one of the world's five nuclear-weapon states. Our membership of NATO means we have our own conventional and nuclear forces on the East-West frontier in Germany, and as a permanent member of the Security Council
and a member of the Commonwealth we have many global responsibilities. No longer a superpower, we nevertheless hold a pivotal position and are capable of playing a constructive role over disarmament (2.xv-xvi).

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail? OR Would all possible uses of Britain's 'deterrent' be suicidal? Is its only effect to encourage proliferation?

Although the British deterrent can be said to provide ultimate protection against the possibility of nuclear blackmail (3.23), this does not make the suggestion that Britain should give up her independent deterrent intellectually untenable, so long as we accept that NATO should still retain nuclear and conventional deterrents, and provided also that we are content to rely upon the United States nuclear guarantee (5.73).

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making? OR Is the 'second centre of decision making' an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

Many of us who believe in the need for nuclear deterrence for NATO find the case for Britain remaining a nuclear weapon state and contributing to NATO's nuclear deterrent strategy has been substantially enhanced by political events and US attitudes over the last twenty-five years. Few, if any, for instance, would argue against replacing Polaris on the grounds that were deployed in 1962 against the purchase of Polaris, that the capability was unnecessary, because we could rely totally on the US nuclear guarantee. There is too much concern about successive responses by the President of the United States to the Soviet Union and to Europe across the UK political spectrum for that to carry conviction (4.10). We must consider the changes that are taking place in the United States. At one time, one in four of the United States population had their origins in Europe. Now it is one in ten. There has been a massive shift of population towards the western and southern states. Nobody who knows and loves the United States can fail to appreciate that the Pacific orientation is much stronger than it was ten, let alone twenty years ago (5.735). In these circumstances, as we have seen, the European defence pillar must be strengthened. But it is impossible to see how this can be confined to conventional deterrence and deliberately exclude strengthening nuclear deterrence. A United Kingdom decision to abandon or phase out our own nuclear weapons would not, to put it mildly, be the most convincing way of starting to strengthen the European pillar within NATO (4.11).

For all these reasons, greater Anglo-French cooperation makes the utmost sense, not as an exclusive realtionship, but as an inclusive European relationship. The core of such an arrangement would be to build on existing Franco-German cooperation.
over nuclear strategy on the continent. At the moment, those who scoff at the con-
cept of a European minimum deterrent are trying to have it both ways. They are 
arguing for British independence while tying themselves in for the next thirty years 
to American hardware. Yet they would only ever use that American hardware inde-
pendently if the American nuclear guarantee did not exist. When one considers the 
potential for the Americans to interfere with that Trident missile hardware, in a 
situation where their guarantee had been withdrawn, one must question how inde-
pendent such a system really is. Certainly it is a question, with Britain a member of 
the European Community and arguing for strengthening political cooperation, that 
is far more relevant in the latter part of the 1980s than it ever was in the early part of 
the 1960s (8.6–7). In future, the UK must moor permanently alongside continental 
Europe, instead of merely swinging at anchor in the Channel (4.7–8).

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility or Are US forces committed anyway and full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? independent British forces guarantee and do British nuclear forces guarantee independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

If Europe is more self-sufficient in its defence, the United States will not pull 
out of the NATO alliance. It will strengthen those in the United States who 
wish to remain in NATO if they feel that Europe is making a strong conven-
tional and nuclear commitment. That view is held by many Americans, and 
many Americans stationed in Europe who are responsible for defence decisions 
in NATO also hold that view. The Supreme Allied Commander in Europe is 
only one example arguing that a stronger European defence commitment 
makes it easier for senators and congressmen to retain the American commit-
ment to Europe (5.737).

I passionately believe that strengthening the European pillar is the mechan-
ism whereby the United States nuclear guarantee will actually be upheld. It is 
the mechanism whereby we will see a continued United States' presence in 
Europe and a significant one. Everything I heard in Europe confirmed this 
belief. For do not believe that in five years' time there will be 325,000 US 
troops in Europe. Congress will reduce that upper limit within that period. Far 
better for such a change to be done by agreement, and for it to be introduced in 
a way that is coherent and planned, than for it to be done as a result of unilateral 
decision by the US Congress out of frustration. We know this is likely to 
happen, and it is obvious common sense to anticipate it happening (6.2).

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? or Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

This is a time for rethinking the budget. During the next three years there will be a 
reduction in real terms in defence spending of more than four and a half per cent. 
All of us should be prepared to reconsider past positions and to think long and hard 
about the future of our armed services, and, in particular, about how we strengthen
the European pillar of NATO (5.732, 743). We have seen why it is essential that there is an effective nuclear component in Europe defences. But if on no other grounds, we should reconsider the Trident programme on grounds of expense. Despite the money already allocated, I still believe that it is possible to cancel Trident. If we do not do so, it will cut savagely into our defence capacity (5.736). The "Towpath Papers" puncture the Government's repeated claims that they are planning for a fifty-strong surface fleet, and show that provision will not be made for building Hunter Killer submarines during the Trident submarine construction programme. So Trident not only eats into the surface fleet and endangers new amphibious provision, but it will reduce the Hunter Killer submarine fleet, which is the equivalent in firepower and effectiveness to the battleships of the past (8.4). For that reason, I am prepared to look at less powerful, but nevertheless effective, alternatives (5.737).

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendency in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

If Britain were ever to give up nuclear weapons, it should only be as part of a consensus calculated decision really contributing to the end of ridding the whole world of nuclear weapons. (4.23). In present circumstances it would have little effect in that direction: for example, the decision of France or Britain or both to give up their nuclear weapons would not affect the Soviet or US arsenals (1.45).

As it is, one of the arguments for Britain remaining a nuclear weapons state is that it is thereby able to use its influence in some areas to achieve arms control – for example, our relationship with the US is sufficiently robust for Britain to maintain an independent position on a test ban (3.22). But the critical factor is European. What is vital to Europe is that France should not be left as the only European nuclear weapon state. For the European Community, particularly in political cooperation, depends on a balance between the member states – large and small, nuclear and non nuclear. Apart from developing new missiles, there is no good reason why France and the UK should not discuss the theory behind their existing strategic weapons, and to widen those discussions to include the Federal Republic. Discussions would not compromise the independent control of forces. But it would mean that slowly, through the habit of working together, Britain and France would build up a similar perception about nuclear strategy. This would give a solidity to the way Europe approaches the United States. It would reinforce the vital hinge which must link Europe to North America (4.11–12, 18).

1. Naval documents dropped by mistake on a towpath in Sonning, Berkshire, and found by a freelance journalist.
Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

We have already mentioned cost. In addition, Trident represents a very substantial increase in nuclear capability over and above Polaris. It is a very good system, and I am pleased that the United States has it, because the Soviet Union has the same capabilities as those that are contained in the Trident system. But it represents a dramatic 800 per cent increase in the number of warheads – from 64 to 512, and a 1,200 per cent increase in the operational availability of warheads – from 32 to 384. The question for Britain is whether we can afford it, and whether, in arms control terms, it makes any sense for a country that has always believed in a minimum deterrent. It is whether we can get a reasonable nuclear minimum deterrent that will make a contribution to Europe’s minimum deterrent for less money than we would have to spend on Trident. There are a number of options and we should look seriously at them. There are existing systems like the American Tomahawk missiles, or the possibility of building similar French or British cruise missiles. And there are other alternatives. (5.736–7).

My own view is that the submarine option is still the best, and Tomahawk cruise missiles the cheapest. Nothing has done more harm than those people who have tried to argue that it is Trident or nothing. Some of the most senior military figures in this country now worry that we are getting ourselves into a situation where, if we go on insisting that it is Trident or nothing, then it may be that ‘nothing’ is the answer (6.12, 16).

2 NATO Forces and US Bases

Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance?

There is a logical inconsistency and moral weakness in the Labour Party’s case. The logic of disowning nuclear weapons – not just our own but our allies – leads progressively to the justification of neutralism and to a lesser commitment to NATO, and it leads eventually through a grave impact upon the cohesion of NATO, to its dismemberment as we know it (5.735).

Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?

It should be matter of concern to us all, irrespective of our political position, that Northern European Socialist International parties have developed such a hostile attitude to nuclear weapons. France can change governments from
Right to Left and back to the Right with a barely perceptible shift in nuclear strategy. The advent of the SPD to government in the Federal Republic of Germany, or the Dutch Labour Party in Holland would, however, lead to a perceptible tremor in the NATO Alliance. Whereas, the advent of the British Labour Party into government would, in marked contrast, trigger an earthquake within NATO. The creation of the SDP in the UK owed much to the dangerous defence policy progressively adopted by Labour since 1980. That policy is, in 1986, even more irresponsible and damaging to the collective strength of NATO. Now Labour is challenging the basic NATO strategy of nuclear deterrence. They are pledged to throw the United States out of all nuclear bases in the United Kingdom, as well as cancelling Trident and decommissioning Polaris. The effect of such a decision on opinion in the United States would be devastating (4.15-16). We should consider what has happened to the ANZUS treaty¹, which has been effectively set aside because the United States was not prepared to be a member of a treaty organization when one member of it had said that ships carrying nuclear weapons could not go through its ports (5.728). Hopefully, Labour will never be allowed to put such a policy into practice (4.16).

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally? OR Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any superpower confrontation unless bases are removed?

The decision of France or Britain to give up their nuclear weapons would not ensure that either country avoided nuclear weapons being used on their territories. France has always been an extension of the European battlefield, Britain a strategic military island that would have to be towed away into the Southern Atlantic before it would be inviolate. A non-nuclear Britain would be just as subject to nuclear blackmail, and possibly to nuclear attack (1.45).

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US 'umbrella' than any other Western ally – or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

It is the deterrent value of the mutually assured second strike capability held by the superpowers that underpins peace in Europe (3.11). So it is dishonest of the Labour Party to claim that it will not depend on the American guarantee. It knows perfectly well that it is only because of the American nuclear guarantee that is can even pretend to indulge in the luxury of unilateralism. How can it justify throwing the United States out of its nuclear bases here, while still

rlying on membership of a NATO Alliance whose strategy is firmly based on conventional and nuclear deterrence? (5.728).

Moral Considerations

Some allege that the consequences of nuclear weapons are so morally outrageous that it is immoral even to threaten their use, when the threat, to be credible, must carry a readiness to act and risk an uncontrolled escalation. Some argue that there is no morality to killing of any kind and therefore none in war. In this sense the arguments of the pacifist have an absoluteness that no argument can easily confound, and deserve respect. Religious thought has through the ages tried to wrestle with the moral dilemma of war; and many compromises have evolved over time, some even to be blessed. But there has always been a sense that there is some undefined limit to the extent of the compromise. To many, nuclear weapons cross that threshold, and they rightly demand verifiable reductions by multilateral negotiations.

But those who advocate a non-nuclear defence strategy in terms of morality or practicality must rebut the argument that nuclear deterrence is the only way of preventing war between the great powers, including nuclear war. If it is possible to show that there is any other way of doing this, while potential enemies still possess a nuclear capability and a dangerous conventional superiority, then there is no possible justification for their retention (1.39). But at the moment there is no other way. The horror of nuclear war and the moral ambivalence surrounding nuclear deterrence should not blind us to the appalling devastation of conventional war, or to the fact that precipitate unilateral nuclear disarmament on moral grounds might make nuclear war itself more likely. The main problem of a unilateralist strategy is that it does not try to understand war, and by its impatience can provoke war (4.2, 1.42). Nuclear disarmament can only safely be achieved by painstaking multilateral negotiation. It cannot be achieved by moralizing (3.5).

Recommendations

NOTE. These recommendations are deduced by the editor from the sources already cited. In each case references are given.

In Britain, those who argue for multilateral negotiations and those who advocate unilateral disarmament measures, those who wish to remain fully committed to NATO and those who espouse neutrality, have more in common than they often realize. The ‘Programme of Action’ detailed in the Palme Commission Report is a coherent package of measures around which all can rally to reverse the present deeply disturbing trends (2.xv).

1 Yes – if current negotiations for deep cuts fail (10.11–12).
2 Yes, there should be an immediate moratorium on weapons testing in space (3.13). The ABM Treaty should be clarified and reinforced (9.2-4).

3 Yes. There should be a complete ban over a three- or preferably five-year period on all testing, and an immediate moratorium on all tests once agreement is reached and prior to the treaty being ratified (2.xix). Arguments against this do not hold up.

(a) Can a test ban be verified to give a sufficiently credible guarantee that there will be no cheating? This is a complex technical subject, but most of the problems that seemed insurmountable in the 1960's have now been overcome. There is widespread agreement that this is no longer a reason for not pressing ahead (3.16-22).

(b) Would a ban damage the safety and reliability of the existing nuclear stockpile? The 'stockpile' or 'shelf-life' argument only surfaced within the context of a CTB as a major issue in 1977-8, when coincidentally for the first time it looked as if the breakthrough in verification was such that a CTB might actually be signed. Up until 1980, not a single American or British nuclear test had been undertaken on stockpiled weapons. The self-life argument was a deliberate diversion, the protection of a vested interest by the nuclear testing laboratories at Los Alamos, Livermore and Aldermaston (3.14).

(c) Would a ban prevent new weapon development as part of assuring an invulnerable second strike capability? The US and the Soviet Union have such a vast backlog of detailed and wide ranging knowledge of all likely new warhead designs that a CTB would impose few inhibitions to their continuing to develop new weapons systems. In any case, computer simulation techniques are now available in compensation (3.15-16).

A comprehensive Test Ban Treaty could be a crucial stage in preventing further proliferation and moving towards minimum deterrence.

4 For reasons explained in B(iii) this is not critical. What is important is a shift of NATO strategy away from reliance on the early use of nuclear weapons.

5 Yes, within the context proposed in AI(iii) and (iv). There should be a fifty per cent cut in strategic systems. INF systems should be, first reduced, then removed from Europe west of the Urals (9.4, 6.19).

6 A functional battlefield nuclear weapon-free corridor should be established along the East-West frontier in Europe (see B(iii)).

7 Yes (See A2(A)(vi)).

8 This should be part of a move towards minimum deterrence (see AI(iv)). The eventual goal of complete nuclear disarmament depends upon other, wider factors (see A2(B)(iv)).

9 See 8.

10 Yes (see A2(A)(v)).

11 See 4.
12 Yes, within the context of A1(iii) A2(A)(iv) & B(iv).
13 No (See B(vi) & C1(ii)).
14 No (See B(vi) & C2(ii)).
15 See 6.
16 No. But Britain should be prepared to give up her independent forces as part of a general settlement aimed at global nuclear disarmament (see C1(v)).
17 So far as concerns any money saved by abandoning the Trident programme, yes (C1(iv)).
18 Yes, as part of a general settlement with the Warsaw Pact (see A1(iii) & B(iii)).
19 No (See C2(ii)).
20 Yes (See C2(i)).
Biographical Note

Born in 1929, James Schlesinger was a professor at the University of Virginia between 1955 and 1963. First a senior staff member, he was then Director of Strategic Studies at the RAND Corporation between 1963 and 1967. Between 1971 and 1973 he was chairman of the US Atomic Energy Commission. He served as Secretary of Defense between 1973 and 1975, and as Secretary for Energy between 1977 and 1979. Since then, among other things, he has been at the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University.

As Secretary of Defense under President Nixon, James Schlesinger is associ-
ated with a move away from explicit reliance upon the threat of direct attack on enemy centres of population, often referred to in shorthand as 'Mutual Assured Destruction', and towards the elaboration of a varied range of selective options aimed principally against enemy military forces.

Editorial Comment

This set of answers was given in an interview in London on November 14, 1986. It is full of interest for readers who want to understand something of the thinking of a distinguished strategist and statesman, who has helped to shape current American nuclear policy, but is at the same time critical of a number of aspects of it. He has been involved with questions of nuclear strategy since the 1950s, and, as his answers under Moral Considerations show, with its morality. The moral dimension to the move away from a policy of assured destruction is stressed. James Schlesinger's response is informed by the experience of having been responsible for the conduct of public policy at a time when many Americans felt that the Soviet Union took advantage of a period of notable United States restraint (for example, see the answer to question B(ii)). But he is as impatient with what he regards as the alarmism of critics on the political right in the United States, as he is with what he describes as the fantasies indulged in by critics on the political left in Britain.

The answers to questions such as B(vi) and C1(ii) give British readers an American perspective on European defence, while the answers to C1(iii), C2(i) and C2(ii), show how much room there is or is not seen to be for proposals to abandon an independent British deterrent, and to withdraw unilaterally from NATO's nuclear dispositions.

JAMES SCHLESINGER

A Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has OR Has it mainly been other factors? kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?

Without nuclear deterrence we might have had far greater instability in the world. Particularly in the years immediately after World War II, the American strategic nuclear advantage provided stability for Western Europe in the face of what was believed to be overwhelming Soviet conventional military superiority. Nuclear weapons were seen as the great equalizer. To be sure, there are always other factors involved in such complex historical processes, and, even without nuclear deterrence, we might not have come to blows. But nuclear weapons have been the principal element in the post-war military
scene, and, as such, have reinforced the condition of peace. Without them, the maintenance of peace might have been bought, if at all, then only at the cost of greater Soviet influence, if not domination, over much of continental Western Europe.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war? OR Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?

The critics of current policy on the right-hand side in your analysis (who are on the political left) have here taken over a position that has long been of concern to prudent military planners in the West. Before there was mutual possession of invulnerable second-strike forces, that is for the first twenty-five or thirty years after World War II, American nuclear superiority offset Soviet military advantage elsewhere, so that the Soviets had no desire to test American resolve. And the Americans, given the nature of the American democracy, had no ambitions to expand by pressing the Soviet Union into territorial concessions. But the establishment of an invulnerable second-strike force on the part of the Soviet Union has removed that security, and there has, it seems to me, been appropriate concern that the Soviets might take advantage of what could be seen to be a stalemated condition to encroach at lower levels. It is, indeed, a serious problem. But it is, perhaps, ironical that this issue has been raised by some of those on the political left over here, because it suggests a malevolent intent on the part of the Soviet Union, which in other areas they are loath to concede.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has 'flexible response' dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

The possession of an invulnerable second-strike force remains for the West a necessary condition for deterrence, but, as we have just seen, not a sufficient condition. We need something in addition to that second strike force, preferably conventional, but in view of Soviet conventional strength, also a strategy of selective nuclear strikes, in order to maintain the credibility of the deterrent. This is particularly important for the effectiveness of extended deterrence – especially for the protection of those parts of Western Europe which are contiguous to the Soviet Union and therefore lie most open to Soviet military pressure.

By broadening the concept of how theatre or strategic nuclear weapons may be deployed in this way, we have dramatically enhanced deterrence for the West, and thereby raised the threshold which represents the barrier between peace and war. The critics represented in the right-hand column are right when they say that a strategy of selective strikes lowers the threshold between
the same. Arms control has been a visible success, albeit a partial success. One
has only to think of what the expansion of offensive weapons would have been
on both sides if we had not had the ABM treaty of 1972. We in the United
States had planned to respond to the Soviet Moscow defence system by
expanding our number of strategic warheads if necessary to 50,000. Surely
those on the political left in the UK can understand the difference between
10,000 and 50,000 warheads, just as their counterparts on the political right
in the United States should be able to.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

As in so much of this there are no black-and-white answers. There are only
shadings. In this case the critics represented in the right-hand column have a
point. It is only a half-truth, to be sure, but it is a point. Technological
developments have at times had an impact on strategic force structure that was
not clearly perceived in advance. We have not always controlled deployment as
well as we should have done in this respect. Incidentally, in the West this
problem comes in part from the nature of democracy, which is something that
we value for other reasons. The rapid turnover of governments in the West,
the rapid turnover of senior officials in defence and foreign policy, means that
the continuity is provided elsewhere, and the preservation of a strategic vision
which dominates deployment is difficult to achieve. But critics should not
forget the power of the Soviet military-industrial complex here. It varies from
time to time, shrinking when there is a long-established leader like Stalin or
Brezhnev, but sometimes playing a critical role in periods of transition. So
there is some truth in what the critics say. But it is only a half-truth. In the
United States the role of these so-called 'vested interests' is much less than it
is in the Soviet Union. They can influence judgements at the margin, but they
do not create and remove governments, and do not determine overall policy.
And critics should reflect more carefully on the role of technology. Those who
say that, once we have achieved an invulnerable second strike force, we can
relax and stop competing in arms, should recall how we acquired such a force
and how hard we have to work to maintain it. If they would think back to the
1950s, when we were dependent upon bombers, all soft and all located on a
very small number of bases in the United States, and when we were frightened
to death at the thought of a Soviet surprise attack, they will know that it was
the technology of the ICBM and the SLBM that provided the invulnerability
that they now so rightly praise. And this would never have come into existence
if their views about the impetus of technology and the power of vested interests
had prevailed.
2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

It seems to be intriguing that the political left in Britain, which, so far as I know, has not had the deepest admiration for Mr Reagan, should here be campaigning under his slogan from 1980 – the ‘window of vulnerability’. In the United States it has been the right wing that has talked about the increasing threat from time-urgent first-strike weapons. Some might think that we have a ‘Pearl Harbor complex’ – that suddenly, one bright morning, there will be a nuclear Pearl Harbor. I regard all of this as much exaggerated, whether it comes from the British left or the American right. This would be a decision taken only by irrational people. There will be no such nuclear bolt from the blue, either from the East or from the West. But I share the desire of the critics to improve the stability of the balance, and to avoid anything that increases, however modestly, the capability and therefore the temptation to initiation.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? OR Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

To those who argue as in the right-hand column here I answer with an English phrase – balderdash! Command and control systems will never be perfect, but they will probably be good enough, even under wartime conditions, and even though they may be damaged, to transmit the necessary minimum of orders. But, more important than this, each side knows that the command and control system on the other will be capable of this, and therefore both will refrain from those actions that would inevitably put their own societies at risk. Whether they be here or in the Soviet Union, and whatever their public professions, the political leaders that I have observed tend to be extraordinarily prudent men. They will not recklessly get themselves involved in nuclear war.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end hostilities swiftly? OR Is the idea that nuclear war could be limited once it had broken out a dangerous illusion?

I always appreciate clairvoyance. There is no guarantee that a nuclear exchange would be limited. But it is clear that it is in the interest of both sides that such an exchange be terminated without major damage to either society. An initial, very limited, employment of nuclear weapons will make the leaders on both sides very sober people. I find it odd that those who parade under the banner of the rationality of man should come to such negative conclusions regarding the rationality of the leaders.
conventional and nuclear war. It is this that enhances deterrence. Where they are wrong is to imply that this is more dangerous than the alternative. They do not seem to understand that it is the lowered threshold between conventional and nuclear war that, by offsetting the lack of credibility of an exclusively second strike force, thereby at the same time offsets the invitation to sub-deterrent encroachment. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, as the English might say, and the reality is that the strategy of flexible response has been sufficient to deter the Soviet Union.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

On the whole, the variety of nuclear weapons systems has stabilized deterrence. One would not want to be dependent on a single type of system that could, for example, only go after Moscow. That would lack credibility. It is the richness of the Western deterrent, provided primarily by the United States, that provides its credibility. The notion of having a very simplistic strategy—a minimum deterrent—which afflicts those who argue as in the right-hand column, would be dangerous. The critics do have a point about numerical redundancy. I think that the sizes of the two forces could be cut. That is why we are engaged in arms control discussions. But the numerical redundancy is relatively trivial when set against the overall picture. Insofar as the Soviet Union has aggressive intentions, it is the richness of the Western deterrent that restrains those ambitions.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

Let me state very clear that we would not prefer rough equivalence. We would prefer to have an edge. But the Soviet Union is unlikely to be generous enough to provide us with that edge, so we must settle for rough equivalence. And that rough equivalence could be achieved by unilateral appreciation of mutual dependence. But it is much more likely to be achieved through arms control negotiations. That is why we pursue arms control negotiations. Let me address myself to the issues raised in the column on the right, because I find myself bemused by the fact that the attack on arms control, which in Britain tends to come from the political left, happens to be precisely the attack on arms control that in the United States comes from the political right.

In the United States arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union have been under attack, because it is said that arms control has never worked and that it has simply been a way of adjusting to the arms race. My response to both the political left in the UK and the political right in the United States is
Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce or threaten a dangerous lowering of the nuclear threshold?

Here I must pay tribute to the admonition of the critics in the right-hand column. We must always try to make sure that there is a clearly marked boundary line between conventional and nuclear war. There have been those in the atomic energy laboratories in the United States, and in the military establishments, who have tried to erode that boundary. In the 1950s, happily once for a brief period, it was American and NATO policy that nuclear weapons were to be treated like conventional weapons. We should not allow the advances in the technology of nuclear weapons to erode what is a very important political line of distinction. I am delighted to be able to pay some tribute to the critics here.

Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? or Is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in (iv)?

This is an immensely complicated subject in which one must deal with nuances of meaning. Both sides represented here have taken too black-and-white an attitude to it. The President of the United States, to my mind regrettably, jumped the traces and turned the whole strategic defence issue on its head. Normally, in research and development programmes, we try to resolve the technical questions before we draw conclusions about strategy and force structure. In this case, radical conclusions were drawn, even though there are innumerable technical problems that have not been resolved. That is very imprudent. And it is ironical that such imprudence comes under the banner of Conservation. On the other hand, the critics represented in the right-hand column have rejected clearly required research and development activities. Why clearly required? Because, whatever the claims of the Americans, the initiative happens to come from the Soviet Union. The Soviets have been vigorously working in this area for some time. It is indispensable that we at least match what they are doing. Does the SDI offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? The answer is simply, no. This is an illusion which may have captivated American society, but the fact that an illusion captivates American society does not transform it into reality. It remains an illusion.

Can Strategic Defence enhance deterrence? Possibly. If it could be used to protect second-strike forces and were guided by arms control, it might have such a result. But, until we know what we are doing, the burden of proof rests upon anyone who wants to upset the ABM treaty.

But the most important benefit of Strategic Defence is that it provides enormous impetus to the Arms Control process. The Soviets are deeply concerned about the SDI, and this is very useful in eliciting a response for them, particularly with regard to offensive weapons. Of course, for those
on the political left in Britain and on the political right in the United States, who curiously enough reject arms control for the same reasons, the role of the SDI in arms control negotiations is not, as I would see it, beneficial, but pernicious.

(vi) *Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies?* OR *Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?*

The first point to be made is that the maintenance of the nuclear deterrent by the two major powers is essential for the preservation of the civilization that they represent. So, even if there is a link between the threat of proliferation and continuing dependence by the great powers on nuclear deterrence, this does not have any policy implications. There is no way that we are going to give up the deterrent in order to ease whatever indignities the non-nuclear powers may feel have been heaped upon them.

The second point is that the link is much more complex than critics are inclined to suggest. The nuclear capable signatories to the Non Proliferation Treaty have agreed to come to the aid of any non-nuclear state threatened by nuclear attack. So a well-protected nuclear deterrent of the kind we have now is what provides deterrence against nuclear attack against the non-nuclear states. In the emotional diatribes on these issues, this kind of underlying reality is sometimes forgotten.

No doubt for those who have refrained from acquiring nuclear capabilities it is somewhat psychologically disturbing to see the superpowers steadily expanding their nuclear arsenals. But this is a state of affairs with which they simply have to live – and it is one with which they have so far been prepared to live. There is no inevitability about the pace of nuclear proliferation. It is a serious problem. But it is a problem that is not adequately dealt with by hand-wringing.

(vii) *Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability?* OR *Is 'arms-control' an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?*

The notion that arms control is an illusion is one shared by the political left in Britain and the political right in the United States. But they come to conclusions which are diametrically opposed. For the former, the conclusion points towards nuclear disarmament; for the latter, it points towards a technologically perfect strategic defence which will make the United States invulnerable. Both sides operate on the basis of a rejection of reality.
effectively executed that provides us with a protection against the instabilities of 1914, to which the critics quite rightly point.

B Nato Policy

(i) *Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe?*

It is maintained in some circles in Britain that the two sides are relatively evenly matched in non-nuclear capabilities. That is touching. The eye of faith can discern things that an observer of reality cannot discern, I wish that these people, who can equate 200 Pact divisions with forty NATO divisions, together with all the problems of deployment, organization and reinforcement, would in addition look at some of the regional disparities. On the north flank of NATO, along the Norwegian-Soviet border, the Norwegians have a couple of companies forward and a brigade some hundreds of miles back at Bodo, up against six Soviet divisions, which can be rapidly reinforced. Only the eye of faith can discern equality in such circumstances. There is some truth in the claim that at times we have exaggerated Soviet advantages. But this notion of equality is a much greater exaggeration the other way.

(ii) *Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power or the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?*

Reality is more complex than any simple formulations of this kind. The critics are right, insofar as the Soviets feel themselves to be encircled and threatened. But the conclusion is wrong. The whole of history since 1945 shows that the Soviets do not respond positively to unconditional offers, but take them to be a sign of disunity and weakness in the West. They are an opportunistic power and take advantage of such opportunities. Indeed, it is because the Soviet Union feels itself to be threatened that it responds in this way, rather than striking a final accommodation. Afghanistan can be seen in this light - and the whole protective cordon in Eastern Europe is such an insulation. A true detente would of course be desirable. But, when the Soviets had it all rolling their way with regard to the climate of detente in the 1970s, they took gross advantage of it. These first-strike weapons, which those whose views are recorded in the right-hand column criticize, were deployed by the Soviet Union during the 1970s, when the United States was standing fast. The Soviets are only likely to be induced to accept balance and detente by an appreication of Western strength.
NATO’s dependency upon nuclear weapons has been excessive. NATO has used nuclear weapons as a kind of crutch. It is to be regretted. In my judgment it should be lessened. We should move further and further away from the early use of nuclear weapons, as circumstances and the build-up of conventional capabilities permit. It would be delightful if those, particularly in Western Europe, who have been most vigorous in their criticism of NATO’s dependency on nuclear weapons, would also be the foremost proponents of a major build-up of non-nuclear forces. That is the obvious logical conclusion. Do we discern that here in the United Kingdom or on the Continent? Regrettably, no. These countries in Western Europe are spending three per cent, four per cent of their GNP on defence: to have a conventional balance they would have to spend eight or nine per cent. That is not where those on the political left want to spend their money, so they indulge in these fantasies of a pre-existing conventional balance. They are right about the desirability of moving away from dependency upon nuclear weapons, but they fail altogether to see and advocate those measures that are necessary in order to do so.

The critics in the right-hand column here stress the robustness of the nuclear balance which they earlier saw as unstable. In order to form a judgement on the real world, one needs to eliminate inconsistencies. Generally speaking, we need to match the Soviet Union in the gross—not in each and every component. The fact that the West has initiated most of the innovations in the nuclear area once again reflects Western weakness in non-nuclear forces. We have seen what the remedy for that is.

As for the recommendation of a freeze—stability is more important than numerical ceilings. For example, had there been a freeze before hardened silos and submarine-based forces had been developed, the result would have been that second-strike forces would today be more vulnerable, an outcome which I would not want to see. A mutual freeze leading to something valuable near-term could be useful, but a unilateral freeze by the West would be likely simply to increase overall Soviet advantage and weaken the stability that protects us.

Similarly, had we had a Comprehensive Test Ban in 1963, our stockpile would be far less secure and far less safe than it is today. We will need a limited number of low yield tests in the future in order to validate the stockpile. That is why I talk about Test Limitation, not a Comprehensive Test Ban.
(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence? OR Should NATO exploit her lead in 'emerging technology' to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

A Soviet perception of our ability to strike deeply weakens Soviet confidence in the superiority of their conventional forces and, to that extent, reduces our reliance on nuclear weapons. This logic should induce critics of NATO nuclear policy to approve deep strike strategies. Certainly alternative strategies, in the form of stronger defences, can be explored. But they tend to come up against political difficulty in Germany, because they suggest the permanent division of the nation. Emerging Technologies have, of course, been proposed by the Reagan administration. I would not count my chickens before they are hatched. I would not want to become dependent upon Emerging Technologies before they have emerged!

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops or the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported? OR Is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

I am not sure that I am the most objective commentator on this matter. I spent some years fighting the Mansfield amendment for the withdrawal of American troops from Europe. and it was in my years as Secretary of Defense that I developed the concept of the NATO triad, in which the three legs of the triad mutually supported one another. American troops in Europe are an essential ingredient in European security, because these small and medium-sized states need the backing of the only available Western superpower if they are to withstand the pressures of the Soviet Union. That is fundamental. Any challenge to that is based upon a misunderstanding.

Now, with regard to the issue of the two superpowers providing the greatest threat to European integrity, these critics apparently cannot distinguish between the superpower that threatens them, and the superpower that protects them. I pity them in their inability to make such an elementary distinction. I would remind them that the reason why American forces are here in Europe is the fear and desperation that came over Europe, particularly at the time of the Korean invasion, when it was felt that the Soviet Union, having unleashed forces in the Far East, would soon unleash forces here in the West. They begged at that time that the United States provide meat on the skeleton of the NATO Alliance. That judgement was and is essentially correct.

There are, of course, understandably, irritations with the United States, and a fear that American global responsibilities will feed back in a way that is detrimental to detente in Europe itself. All of that is true. But one should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. The reason why Western Europe can feel secure enough even to raise these kinds of question today is because of

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1. A recurrent demand from the later 1960s sponsored by the Senate Majority leader, Michael Mansfield.
American protection. That is why the competition between East and West has turned to the Third World, instead of Western Europe as it was in the 1940s and 1950s. That is why the critics have been provided with the intellectual playing-room, if I may call it that, to indulge in these fantasies.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmer consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

From time to time there is the possibility that a unilateral initiative may have a useful effect in catalysing arms control discussion. But one can hardly regard unilateral initiatives as the centre-piece of Western strategy. That is simply a formula for serial disarmament by the West with inevitable consequences. Unilateral measures of this reckless kind will increase risks and must obviously be rejected out of a sense of prudence.

C British Policy

1. The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail? OR Would all possible uses of Britain's 'deterrent' be suicidal? Is its only effect to encourage proliferation?

I should say at the outset that this is a subject upon which I speak with less authority, because I cannot speak as a Britisher. This is a matter that must be decided ultimately by the British themselves. In terms of overall alliance strategy, the view in the United States has historically been an ambivalent one about the British deterrent, save in this one respect: that the British must themselves decide, and we would support that decision. The view that the use of the British deterrent would very likely be suicidal is, of course, correct. But it is also irrelevant. The use of the great Western deterrent against Soviet cities would also very likely be suicidal. But the underlying fallacy of this objection is the notion of the use of the deterrent. The deterrent is there to deter – to avoid the use. This simple reality is what is ignored in the rhetoric of the critic. Having witnessed forty-one years of non-use through successful deterrents, one might think that they would be prepared to see at least the possibility that deterrence deters. Now the British deterrent has the advantage that, although in itself small, it receives reinforcement against the backdrop of the larger Western deterrent. This strengthens the argument for the effectiveness of the British deterrent – but may also, of course, be interpreted as meaning that there is less of a need for it.
(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making? OR Is the 'second centre of decision making' an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

It is an exaggeration, at best, to talk about the British deterrent as part of a second, European, centre of decision-making, as if, given the very small force that the United Kingdom has, and the very large force that the Soviet Union has, the British force would be launched against Soviet cities in the event of a massive conventional attack against West Germany. That is an argument designed to impress those who are impressed by that kind of argument! It is not really sound. The reason for the British force is that it gives comfort to Britain that her national interests will ultimately be protected – and that is a position that the United States has respected.

I think that the broader idea of the British and French nuclear forces being coordinated, if not integrated, into a European force is a long road, though a desirable road to follow. It would take many years and a great deal of expenditure before an adequate force could be built up with second strike capabilities and the perceived capacity to respond to the invasion of another state in Western Europe, namely West Germany, that did not have its own nuclear force. Until such problems are solved, these forces have great national value, great symbolic value, but they are not central to the overall security of the North Atlantic Treaty. Until such time as Europe in its totality has put together a truly European force, it will be dependent upon the American strategic forces, and Europe will depend upon a single centre of nuclear decision-making.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? OR Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

The long-term position of the United States has been that an independent deterrent for the United Kingdom is not an essential condition. The concern has been, however, that the abandonment of the deterrent would be part of a general weakening of determination and commitment to Western defence policy.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? OR Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

This is a matter for the British to decide. But we have all recognized that a British nuclear force detracts from the resources that might otherwise be available for conventional defence.
(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

Britain's undoubted influence with the United States depends, not upon her independent nuclear forces, but upon an overall political relationship that has by now become traditional. Thus the stated policy of the British Labour Party to wind down the British independent deterrent, but increase Britain's contribution to conventional forces, is not, as such, damaging to relations with the United States. But the appropriate fear here is that those commitments that are made to strengthening expenditures on conventional forces, taken while one is getting rid of the nuclear deterrent, will suddenly, if not surprisingly, disappear after one has got rid of it.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? OR Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

This goes to the heart of the question of whether or not the investment of British resources in a viable independent nuclear capability is desirable. This is a question for the British to decide. If the decision is to maintain a viable independent nuclear capability, it points towards Trident as being necessary for the modernization of Britain's forces.

2 NATO forces and US bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance? OR Should British obligations to NATO be met by strengthening conventional forces where necessary within an overall non-nuclear strategy as recommended in B?

In the large, what is written in the left-hand column is correct. I myself have great confidence in the protection afforded by the strategic nuclear forces of the United States that are not European-based. To that extent this is a political, rather than an essential military issue. It is the European allies who have not been satisfied with the protection provided by American's overall strategic capability, and who have demanded, and are demanding, that there should be European-based nuclear forces as well. (In what follows, I treat the French nuclear capability as separate from NATO assets.) Now, if there are to be European-based nuclear forces, then someone has to man them. It is true that some European countries have never participated in this, such as Norway, and that some governments have desired to opt out from time to time, such as the Danish and Dutch governments. But there is a difference between this, and what I will call the defection from the nuclear deterrent by a major Western European state, such as the United Kingdom. The result of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom would be to leave the whole burden to be
borne by West Germany. The political cohesion of the Alliance is more important that the building-blocks of military strategy. The defection of the UK from the nuclear deterrent must inevitably weaken the Alliance.

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible? or Do the large numbers of nuclear facilities yielded to the US erode British sovereignty? Would their removal do more than restore a normal peacetime relationship?

Military requirements change. In the age of the Poseidon, and particularly of the Trident, the requirement for Holy Loch, for example, is much less than it was in the period when we depended upon the short-range Polaris forces. So again the critical questions here are more political than military. A unilateral British decision to opt out will in this case also shift the burden to European allies, while exposing them to some of the distrust that at the moment is directed against the Americans West of the Atlantic. This will be a further erosion of the European concept.

As to the repercussions in the United States of such a forced withdrawal of American nuclear bases from Britain, I have lived too long, and have seen too many prophesies of disaster proved groundless, to predict dramatic consequences. The outcome would depend upon circumstances. If this were read as an irresponsible and anti-American action by those who have long enjoyed American protection, the reaction might be disastrous. Inevitably it would be unfavourable. But it might be mitigated if the reduction were taken in the right spirit and spaced over time. I would hope that sensible people within the British Labour Party would be able to mitigate the political consequences of such an action. Let us just say that the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom would be placed in cold storage for an extended period. As for the idea that British sovereignty has been eroded, the very fact that these policies are being realistically proposed shows that it has not. No. British sovereignty is alive and well.

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally? or Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any superpower confrontation unless bases are removed?

Britain will continue to be targeted by the Soviet Union, so long as she is part of NATO and part of a Europe protected by the United States. The Soviets will target British cities, British military bases, command-control centres, intelligence centres. Elimination of American bases and the independent British deterrent would reduce Soviet concern sharply, but her targets only slightly.
Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US 'umbrella' than any other Western ally - or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

It may make sense politically within the context of the United Kingdom electoral process to say that Britain does not want to shelter under the American umbrella. But it does not make any sense if it is remembered that the United States umbrella is providing protection for Norway, for the Federal Republic, for Italy, for Greece, for Turkey. If one is a beneficiary of the American nuclear umbrella, one can safely say that one rejects dependency upon the umbrella, as long as, happily, it is above one's head.

Moral Considerations

Let us take these questions together, as you suggest. In this world we must always deal with moral perplexities and moral ambiguities. Many people, apparently, think that moral ambiguity can be eliminated simply by decree. I do not.

Now, it is true that a strategy designed to attack civilians and urban areas is, as such, immoral. I have always felt such a strategy to be morally repugnant. It was embraced in the 1950s under the label 'Massive Retaliation', which was directed against Soviet cities, and its only moral justification was that it worked and did not require execution: Actual execution would have been morally repugnant - and perhaps for this reason Secretary Dulles drew back some of the original outline of Massive Retaliation, and stated that our policy would be to respond at times and places of our own choosing. Similarly, I have always had reservations about 'Mutual Assured Destruction' in its original form. It is for that reason that, when I was Secretary of Defense, we moved away from the threat against Soviet cities, to the threat of precise elimination of selected military targets in order to achieve city avoidance. In nuclear matters we should always make the punishment fit the crime. As the Catholic bishops and others have rightly said, massive retaliation is disproportionate and immoral. So, if the Soviets were to engage in a massive conventional attack on the West, the response would be small-scale selective nuclear targeting against the East. I share the moral doubts of the critics and have done something to deliver Western strategy from dependence upon what I regard as the unethical targeting of civilians as an appropriate response. But those who argue that we must rid ourselves of nuclear weapons unilaterally on moral grounds, are taking what to me is a most immoral position. They are saying that we should surrender the free societies of Western Europe to the goodwill of the Soviet Union, which, neither in its present form, nor in its prior form as Imperial Russia, ever demonstrated much respect for the Western notion of liberty. Are English...
liberty, the spirit of the French revolution, the hard-won West German democracy, the freedom of the Scandinavians and the Low Countries, to be sacrificed simply because of correct doubts about the moral ambiguities of nuclear weapon deployment? I would say – no. To make that reckless decision would be an immoral act.

We are left with the question of whether it is immoral to retain a capability of attacking Soviet cities in order to deter the Soviets from attacking or threatening to attack our cities. To this again I say 'no'. That is clearly not the case. What is, indeed, an intriguing question is whether, if the Soviets nevertheless struck our cities, we would be morally entitled to strike at theirs. This has troubled those of us who have been analyzing nuclear weapons since the 1950s – long before the moral discoveries of some of the more recent critics. All that we can say is that in the entirely hypothetical conditions of a prior Soviet attack against our cities, the decision would be taken, as it were, existentially, in a way that we cannot now anticipate. We can do no more than ruminate about the moral aspects of such a decision taken under those circumstances.

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and world poverty and disease? Or is it a scandal that such huge resources are devoted to the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and not to the alleviation of suffering?

Nuclear weapons represent only a small proportion of our total expenditure on military capabilities. So to say that this money should be spend on the relief of poverty (which, I may say, is an historically novel judgement) is to advocate pacifism. Pure pacifism must be respected, but to argue this only in terms of nuclear weapons seems to me to be illogical and unjustifiable.

(vi) Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons? Or does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?

None of the churches has condemned what I have just outlined, and some have endorsed it contingently. They would, quite rightly in my judgement, like to move away from it. But once again, this requires the creation of those forces that will reduce or eliminate Western reliance upon nuclear weapons. There is a difference between captious criticism and responsible action. And the only responsible action, if this is what one desires, is to develop the alternative that will face down Soviet non-nuclear forces, before one throws away the shield that for so long has protected the West.

Recommendations

1. No (See B(iv)).
2. No (See A2(A)v)).
3. No (See B(iv)).
4. No (See B(iii)).
5. Deep, but not unconditional cuts (See A1(iv)).
6 No.
7 Yes (See A2(A)(vi)).
8 No (See A2(B)).
9 No (See A1(iv)).
10 No.
11 No (See B(iii)).
12 No (See B(iv) & B(vii)).
13 This would be up to the British and the French (See C1). 
14 No, for political rather than for military reasons (See C2(ii)).
15 No.
16 As for No. 13.
17 If the decision is to give up the British deterrent, yes (See C1(iv)).
18 No (See C2(i)).
19 No (See C2(i) & C2(ii)).
20 Does not apply.
Biographical Note

E. P. Thompson is a writer and historian. He was one of the founders (in 1980) of END (European Nuclear Disarmament) and is a Vice-President of CND.

Among his writings on peace and international relations are Zero Option (1982), The Heavy Dancers (1985), and Double Exposure (1985), and he has co-edited and contributed to three Penguin Specials: Protest and Survive (1980), Star Wars (1985) and (with Dan Smith) Prospectus for a Habitable Planet (1987).
Editorial Comment

These answers were given in an interview in E. P. Thompson's home near Worcester on December 15, 1986. They represent the thinking of one of the most influential figures in the peace movement. Readers may find answers, such as those to questions A2(A)(vii), A2(B)(iv), B(vi), and B(vii), characteristic in the breadth of their ecumenicism. A champion of diversity and cultural variety, E. P. Thompson contrasts the cold war antagonisms associated with superpower confrontation and condominium, with the historic compromise between different traditions which is necessary if mankind is to survive the nuclear age. British policy is seen to be part of this wider process.

E. P. THOMPSON

A Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?

This is what historians call a 'counter-factual' proposition. It cannot be answered. It's like asking if the Industrial Revolution could have taken place without railways. You can play around with these games, but it's not real history. There are multiple factors at work, and in any case you can't remove one supposed factor and 'replay' the thing in order to find out. Most historians don't believe in counter-factual history.

In this case, there may have been one or two crises, such as the Berlin airlift, when war might have occurred if there had not been a threat of nuclear retaliation. On the other hand, this so-called 'stabilizing factor' has also had the effect of freezing and perpetuating the post-Yalta confrontation of blocs and of deterring the resolution of underlying political differences, with a resulting steady and dangerous build-up of tension on both sides. What is the final account that we will be brought to for all this?

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?

On the left-hand side here we have an example of anthropomorphic projection - the 'pathetic fallacy' of attributing human intentions, in this case those of one or another ruling group, to things, in this case weapons. What we have is a weapon of inconceivable destructive power. To call it a 'deterrent' is a statement of faith in human intentions, and not one that is usually accredited to the other side. For them it is not a 'deterrent', but a possible first-strike weapon. Similarly, it is nothing more than a statement of strategic intention...
or motivation to distinguish between ‘first’ and ‘second-strike’ weapons. NATO, for example, pretends that all its weapons, nuclear and non-nuclear, are ‘second-strike’ weapons, but claims that WTO weapons are ‘first-strike’. And yet NATO refuses to make a declaration of ‘no first use’ of nuclear weapons. It’s a very strange kind of double-talk. This is all part of what I regard as latter-day scholasticism. Deterrence theory is the scholasticism of contemporary times. Arbitrary and elaborate distinctions are made and quarrelled over, endless disquisitions are written, and proposals to reform the deterrent system in this or that way are put forward. And all this does is to distract us from tackling the central problem of the political confrontation of the blocs.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has ‘flexible response’ dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

‘Yes’ to the proposition on the right-hand side.

The arguing on the left-hand side is what I meant when I referred to scholasticism. ‘If this, then that’ – these endless theoretical extrapolations and extensions lead to a ceaseless elaboration of menus and options and levels. Deterrence theory is an in-built accelerator to the nuclear arms race. One of the most common theoretical devices here is the ‘worst-case hypothesis’, by which planners on both sides have to envisage and imagine the worst possible case and evolve answers to it. This constantly worsens the situation, and feeds and exaggerates the next phase of worst-case projection. I once called this ‘Deterrence as Addiction’. This just would not be allowed in other areas of social or political thinking, such as, for example, criminology. The result would be to fill the entire nation with prisons and police forces ‘in case’ the crime rate increased to the maximum that could be conceived. On the other hand, any attempt to operate on the ‘better-case hypothesis’ – to say ‘if such-and-such happened we would be in a better situation, so let’s work for it to happen’ – is dismissed as utopian, romantic, and moralistic, by the monks and hermits of the defence community. And yet, if you look at past human history, it is only where people did work for better-case hypotheses that real progress has been achieved – such as, for example, in the securing of civil liberties. In the 1920s Ghandi would have seemed a romantic utopian, to be written off as ‘unrealistic’.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

I think that the superfluity of nuclear weapons systems is not only strategically pointless, but very dangerous. And this is not just because of their instability as
weapons, but because they are also symbols. As symbols, these weapons systems are a great blast of halitosis in the other side's face. They represent the foulest sort of human message that you can send. All the business about SS20's and Euro-missiles, for example, was simply symbolic political confrontation. It had very little to do with the actual use to which these weapons could be put.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of 'nuclear defence' and 'parity' proved illusory and is 'multilateral negotiation from strength' a contradiction in terms? Has 'arms-control' been just another name for the arms race?

'Yes' to the proposition on the right-hand side.

As I have explained, it is precisely the idea of 'balance', as interpreted through worst-case analysis, which has been accelerating the nuclear arms race in recent decades. It can almost be called the characteristic obsession of the nuclear mentality. For example, Brezhnev and Andropov were ardent believers in balance and parity, and constantly tried to inject it into their end of what they called the 'peace movement'. Contrary to what a number of those in the Western establishments claim, they used to be embarrassed at the fact that sections of the Western peace movement should be advocating unilateral measures. 'The necessary thing is to establish balance and parity' was their refrain. We in END had terrible rows with the Russians at conferences about this. And the same, of course, is true of the monks and hermits on the other side.

What is interesting now is that, with Gorbachev's more flexible approach, all of this seems to be falling away. Joan Ruddock was in the Soviet Union a couple of weeks ago, and I understand that she found a far greater readiness to talk, instead of these blanket po-faced arguments about 'parity'.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

I think that there is considerable force in Solly Zuckerman's arguments. The right-hand side is nearer to the truth. I have recently looked into this in relation to Star Wars, and there is a clear correlation between the firms making Trident, MX, B1 bombers, Cruise, Pershing, and so on, whose order books are running out in the early 1990s, and the industrial lobby pressing for SDI as prospective prime contractors. Then there are what Solly Zuckerman called 'the alchemists of the laboratories', such as the scientists of the Lawrence Livermore laboratory. This is part of what some commentators call 'technological creep'. Finally, as I have already said, there is also an 'ideological creep', which does not just come along behind and endorse what the technologists are doing, but actively spurs them on.

1. Until recently Vice-Chair of CND. Now prospective parliamentary candidate for Deptford.
2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

This is all a question of perception. In my own judgement, neither party at the present time has any serious strategy or policy of first-strike, but in the perception of the other, this can always be seen as a possibility. The SDI is inducing these fears in the Soviet Union at the moment, for example. In this context, everything which tends to computerize decision-making is very dangerous. It is undoubtedly a highly unstable situation, where, as now, for military-technical reasons, at a certain point in an acute political crisis, a side which thinks that the other is planning a nuclear strike of some kind must as a result itself strike first.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? OR Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

The right-hand side is correct. It must be so. Greater time-urgency increases dependence upon the computer, and pushes the whole system further towards launch-on-warning. There simply is no such thing as a bug-free programme at that level of sophistication. And everything to do with SDI and EDI (European Defence Initiative) will be computer-dependent. The time-lag between the first sensor information of an enemy launch, and the projected reply, will be so short that there cannot possibly be room for any kind of political consultation. The response will be virtually automatic. It will be some computer analogue of Colonel North which will be taking the decision.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end hostilities swiftly? OR Is the idea that nuclear war could be limited once it had broken out a dangerous illusion?

'Yes' to the proposition on the right-hand side.

There seems to be quite widespread agreement that it is not feasible to envisage a limited nuclear war being fought with weapons dependent upon cruise or rocket technology. What some people appear to think is feasible is the use of nuclear land-mines and nuclear artillery. But, once these things go off, they will not have clear messages tied to them. The situation will be one of general panic, communications systems will be disrupted, and so on. The whole idea of a limited nuclear war is unrealistic and irresponsible.

Perhaps the place where a nuclear war is becoming every year more possible is the Middle East. It is not hard to see a situation in which Israel used its nuclear arsenal against Iraq or Syria, because it felt its existence threatened. If this did happen, depending upon the political circumstances, it would prob-
ably be something that the two superpowers would stand back from. And over the grave of the Middle East the human species might perhaps learn a bit of sense.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence? OR Do new battlefield and theatre weapons threaten a dangerous lowering of the nuclear threshold?

'Yes' to the proposition on the right-hand side.

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? OR Is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in (i)?

The proposition on the right-hand side is undoubtedly correct. The American SDI certainly offers no hope of effective defence for the population at large (Star Wars I). And, to the extent that it may provide partial protection for land-based nuclear forces (Star Wars II), this can only further accelerate the nuclear arms race. The hawks in the Soviet Union are bound to want to multiply the numbers of their warheads so as to overcome this. To call it 'enhancing deterrence' is just the usual kind of nuclear double-talk. In the meantime, of course, the SDI is clearly undermining arms talks. It may not succeed in shooting down missiles, but it is already shooting down disarmament. It has done this very effectively at Reykjavik. To call it 'defence' is a complete misnomer. Apart from the fact that, in terms of nuclear confrontation, to threaten to disarm the enemy is in itself highly aggressive, there is always the likelihood that these technologies will be adapted for offensive purposes later on. We can envisage exotic new generations of weapons, such as lasers, being put on permanent station in space.

(vi) Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? OR Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

'Yes' to the proposition on the right-hand side.

This is obviously so. The possession of nuclear weapons by some powers puts pressure on others to follow suit. For example, in India, despite a long history of commitment by Congress Party to anti-nuclear non-aligned positions, there is considerable national feeling that the attempt to prevent India from developing her own nuclear arsenal is a way of symbolically downgrading the country. This pressure seems to be becoming harder to resist.

There is also the clear obligation laid on existing nuclear weapon powers which signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty to build down their own nuclear arsenals. The fact that they have not done this, but have, on the contrary, built them up, is in breach of the Treaty.
If the human species is to survive, then somewhere along the road there will have to be agreements of this kind. To that extent, we should not write off the possibility of them. If I am asked to confine myself to the question of arms reduction, then I believe that, in order to get the process going, we need, not negotiations, but actions. I favour independent initiatives, along the lines suggested by Charles Osgood in 'An Alternative to War or Surrender'. There is plenty of fat that can be cut on both sides without danger, and these would be friendly signals, awaiting a response in kind. At some point, also, a phased reduction of conventional forces must no doubt be part of the settlement. But what I object to here is the way in which those who are in fact opposed to reductions of all kinds use this as a last resort in order to block any agreement on nuclear weapons. They use the 'conventional' card, not in its own right, but simply as a way of preventing movement elsewhere.

But in fact I find the whole of this line of argument much too restricted. It is too exclusively weapon-based. What is needed is a much broader political confidence, not necessarily anything to do with weapons. We want to work towards an historic compromise between the two blocs, which must be achieved at all levels and in all kinds of ways. The reduction of weapons is likely to be a consequence rather than a cause of this. Nuclear weapons are the most graphic symbol of what we are trying to get away from. They may, therefore, be the hardest point at which to begin to do so.

(b) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely? OR Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?

The proposition on the left-hand side is taken completely out of context. The dismantling of nuclear arsenals is not going to happen without far-ranging political, cultural, and economic agreements at the same time. I really refuse to discuss one apart from the other.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war? OR Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?

The objective of the peace movement has always been to prevent both nuclear and conventional wars. I am not interested in trying to distinguish between them. Those who argue as on the left-hand side seem incapable of imagining an end to the confrontation between the blocs. But I can envisage the possibility that this might be transformed remarkably rapidly – as rapidly as the

old colonial empires disappeared and thawed like snow after World War II. Once the process begins, it will not be limited to negotiations about arms. It will be a total political process involving the healing of cultures. It is not a climate in which a conventional war will come about.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out?

In a certain sense it is not possible to ‘disinvent’ nuclear weapons. But it might be within reach of human culture to disinvent the capacity to use them. That is, to make them outlaws to human culture.

There have been suggestions that each side might keep a handful of nuclear armed submarines during this process. It’s very hypothetical. But I don’t object.

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility?

I agree that those who refuse to contemplate even multilateral nuclear disarmament are giving up hope of a rational world order. What is important is not guessing what the end process might be, because that will happen beyond our time, but beginning to put the thing into reverse now. The repair of human culture will no doubt lead to all kinds of emergencies, hazards and political accidents along the way. A real thaw in the Eastern bloc would not proceed evenly or tidily. What is important is that neither side should try to take advantage of difficulties which the other might encounter on the passage back to normality. I do not see an abrupt transition to non-alignment, but a slippage in both blocs towards de-alignment. It is not synchronization that is needed, but some ‘give’ on both sides. If you like, an increasing Finlandization of the countries in Eastern Europe, and a Swedenization or Austrianization of the countries in Western Europe.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely?

The proposition on the right-hand side is nearer to the truth, with the two heavily-armed camps, and war-fighting plans which could so easily dictate policy in a time of political crisis. Historians are always being asked ‘What lessons can we learn from the past?’ Well, one of the lessons that we can learn is that the immediate past is often a misleading paradigm for the present. Our memories are based on experiences from thirty, forty, or fifty years ago – and very often that is exactly what is not being repeated. The Soviet Union’s
historical memory is still overwhelmingly of Nazi aggression in World War II, and therefore their image of the future is of aggression from the West of the same kind. For the Americans it's more the fear of another Pearl Harbour - a sudden and unexpected first strike out of a blue sky. It is the trauma of the immediate past which often misleads the present, and immobilizes it. If you want to look at historical parallels you usually have to look further back. I think that 1914 is much more of a paradigm of our present predicament - the arms race, the inflexible alliances, the involuntary drift to some 'Sarajevo'.

B Nato Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? OR Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

The proposition on the right-hand side is nearer to the truth. There is gross and deliberate exaggeration of Soviet bloc force strength on the part of NATO apologists here. Large numbers of Soviet troops are there for police purposes in the East European countries. Many of the WTO forces are liable to be disloyal or ineffective. Numbers of Soviet tanks are always mentioned, but little reference is made to their battle-worthiness. And so it continues. This is all part of what Dan Smith describes as a 'con trick', which has been going on since the 1960s - the counting game with conventional forces. Assessments such as those made by the Institute of Strategic Studies, for example, are more modest.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power OR Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of arms-control agreements by Western determination and restraint within a general context of detente?

I am much more in agreement with the proposition on the right-hand side here. It is true that the Soviet Union is still saddled with the legacy of Stalinism, is overripe for internal reform, and is encumbered by a periphery of increasingly restless client states. It is also true that there is as yet little evidence that Gorbachev and his associates are in any sense democrats. But they do represent the new generation of modernizers and technocrats, and the West should be prepared to encourage and support them as such. If Western governments do not reciprocate friendly gestures made by the Soviet Union or offer independent initiatives of their own, there is a great danger that Gorbachev will be discredited and the opportunity for further peaceful progress lost. The trouble is that there are a number of very dangerous people around the American President who are finding it hard to play against Gorbachev's hand at the

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1. A member of the Alternative Defence Commission, and Vice-Chair of CND.
2. For example, the widely influential annual The Military Balance.
moment, and would far rather be dealing with someone like Brezhnev. They would like to discredit the present leadership for that reason.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? OR Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

The proposition on the right-hand side is correct. As the Welsh saying has it, ‘Granny was never ill until she died’.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing? OR Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

‘Yes’ to the proposition on the right-hand side. Within this context I am very much in support of CND’s general strategy for Britain. It is possible for a small nation to take an initiative of this kind.

(v) Are NATO ‘forward defence’ and ‘deep strike’ strategies essential for effective deterrence? OR Should NATO exploit her lead in ‘emerging technology’ to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

There is a Penguin Special coming out in February on this, called ‘Prospectus for a Habitable Planet’. The chapter on non-aggressive defence strategies is written by April Carter, who is on the Alternative Defence Commission. She comes down very much on the right-hand side here, and I agree with her. This is all part of the wider process of working towards measures which might provide common security to both blocs.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported? OR Is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

‘Yes’ to the proposition on the right-hand side. This is a principal platform of END policy now. We want to see the withdrawal of all Soviet troops and bases from East Europe, and all American troops and bases from West Europe. In broad terms, this is bound to be the direction in which we move, so the question simply is – how can we do it with minimum risk of upheaval and instability? The great enigma in all of this is the pace of change in the Soviet Union. This is something which none of us can predict. The process will no doubt evolve at different speeds and in different ways in different parts of Europe. And the West will have to be part of it.

If you travel in Eastern Europe, there can be no question at all but that this is the direction in which people want us to go. Youthful opinion in Hungary,
for example, wants Soviet forces withdrawn, but knows that this cannot happen if there is not comparable movement in the West. It is a highly sensitive subject. After a recent talk I gave in Hungary, an old man stood up and said that Soviet troops should leave, and the young people in the audience turned their backs on him. They thought he was an 'agent provocateur'. Either that, or one of the 'wounded' of 1956, who had never recovered from that trauma.

But the same is also true in the West. Although, unlike Eastern Europe, Western Europe is in a sense occupied by consent, the results are still pernicious. As in the East, there is the great danger of being caught up in the superpower nuclear confrontation, which does not relate to European interests. And another development, which depresses me tremendously, is the creeping authoritarianism in a number of Western societies. Britain is a particularly bad case. This country is much less democratic and open in spirit than it was in 1945. Organs like the security services, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Ministry of Defence, and so on, are removed from accountability, and what is left of the democratic process is becoming increasingly ritualistic. American penetration into the establishment in this country is part of the whole process.

So the main priority is to end the present exaggerated and unnatural bipolarity of world politics. It is the global hegemony of the two superpowers which must be dismantled, because their political and military confrontation represents the greater danger to the survival of the human species at the moment. We must encourage the development of alternative centres of initiative and influence, and work towards far more plural diplomacies. I see great hope and immense potential in the non-aligned world, which now easily outnumbers those still under the tutelage of the two power blocs. Particularly if China is added to its weight, this represents, not only a majority of the world's population, but huge potential markets, alternative areas of cultural exchange, and so on. The superpowers are going to have to take notice – particularly if more and more countries walk out of the theatre, because they are no longer prepared to be an audience for these Reykjaviks and Genevas.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarming consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

The trap in the proposition on the left-hand side lies in the second word – 'Western'. It is this continual insistence on seeing everything in terms of the two power blocs, and on identifying with one of them, which perpetuates the present system, prevents gradual and carefully managed change, and allows the water...
to build up behind the dam until eventually it breaks. As I have said, I do not want just to talk in terms of weapons-systems at all. We should be thinking much more broadly about all the interchange needed to bring about the historic compromise. But, if I was forced to confine myself to the question of disarmament, and argue in terms that would be understood by the defence community, I would suggest that the GRIT\textsuperscript{4} strategy, worked out in Osgood's book, and recommended in the Church of England working party report 'The Church and the Bomb', is a very reasonable one. This is not 'unilateral disarmament', but graduated independent initiatives aimed at reducing tension and creating the atmosphere for further measures. Every upward movement in the arms race is one-sided. We don't ask the other side 'Can we introduce Trident?' — we just introduce it. So the downward movement can be taken one-sidedly, also. And then the ratchet can be held at that point, and you can wait for a response. If there is no response, then it would evidently become increasingly difficult politically to hold it. But, unless such unconditional initiatives are offered, and responded to, on both sides, it is hard to see how there can be any hope for arms control. I know of two reasons for believing that this is the right moment for the West to offer signals and actions of this kind. First of all, there are the Soviet Union's manifest economic difficulties. And, second, there is the fact that their entire diplomatic strategy is now based upon their trying to present themselves as the peace-loving pioneers. It would be almost impossible for them not to respond in some way. They have, after all, been making their own unilateral initiatives, especially their long-sustained Test Moratorium. The ball is now in the court of 'the West'.

C British Policy

1. The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?

'Yes' to the proposition on the right-hand side. A 'weapon of last resort' simply means a suicide weapon. And I just do not see a scenario in which the question of the nuclear blackmail of Britain would arise. Yugoslavia has not been blackmailed, nor even has Finland, a tiny country on the border of the Soviet Union.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making?

OR Is the 'second centre of decision making' an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defence?

The statement on the left-hand side is just not in my mind-set at all. They are talking about the destruction of Europe. Why should one want to participate in that?

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? OR Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

I do not want 'US commitment to Europe' in the first place. In the second place, it is not to 'Europe', but to NATO partners (or clients) only.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? OR Can Britain's nuclear forces only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

We must include the question of disarmament with the questions of foreign policy, and of cultural and economic relations in general. We must pursue measures which will reduce the state of confrontation between the blocs, and allow both nuclear and conventional disarmament to proceed together. I'm not going to argue this like a shopkeeper.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? OR Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

Getting rid of British nuclear weapons, and the adoption of an independent foreign policy, would be the first steps towards increasing British influence in the world since the end of the Second World War. At the moment, Sweden probably has more influence than we do, because we are seen to be little more than the most dependent of all the client states of the USA. With our long historical connections with Europe, Africa and Asia, our resumption of independence of movement, so far from weakening us, would make us a great deal stronger.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century? OR Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

'Yes' to the proposition on the right-hand side.

2 Nato Forces and US Bases

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance? OR Should British obligations to NATO be met by strengthening conventional forces where necessary within an overall non-nuclear strategy as recommended in B?
I welcome the Labour Party's stand on nuclear weapons, but I wish they had also adopted a more independent foreign policy. I think that it is the Americans who should be expelled from NATO. Or, failing that, we should act as we want to act, and, if other members of NATO want to expel us, let them. Our policy should be one of non-alignment with either of the two blocs, and mediation between them in association with other non-aligned powers.

(ii) Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible? OR Do the large numbers of nuclear facilities yielded to the US erode British sovereignty? Would their removal do no more than restore a normal peacetime relationship?

'Yes' to the proposition on the right-hand side. The existence of American bases in this country is, indeed, a major component in the serious erosion of British sovereignty. The American penetration of the British establishment, which I was mentioning earlier, has gone much further than many people realize. I do not mean the American people, I mean very nasty Americans. Some of the things that have been going on in the security services, and possibly inside the Ministry of Defence, are quite scandalous. There is direct nobbying of individuals within these organizations by the American CIA, American multi-nationals, and so on. If this were summarily removed, it might induce a measure of rationality into American thinking about their role in Europe.

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally? OR Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any superpower confrontation unless bases are removed?

In view of recent findings about the 'nuclear winter', these questions are somewhat abstract. So I would not advocate a non-nuclear policy for Britain on the grounds of safety. The reason for declaring Bradford, for example, a 'nuclear free zone' is not in the expectation that as a result Bradford would not be hit, but as a symbol.

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US 'umbrella' than any other Western ally - or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

'Yes' to the proposition on the right-hand side. We can't stop the Americans persisting with nuclear weapons. But we will be no more 'sheltering' under a 'nuclear umbrella' than is Austria, say, or Sweden. Or than Yugoslavia is 'sheltering' under a Russian one.
Moral Considerations

(i) Is it morally right to pursue the policy least likely to cause human suffering? May this sometimes involve doing things which in other circumstances would be wrong?

(ii) In formulating policy should we weigh up the probability of success and the relative costs in terms of human suffering of alternative nuclear and non-nuclear strategies?

(iii) So far as concerns intention, need we look no further than the fact that our sole aim in deploying nuclear weapons is to prevent their use?

(iv) Are there possible uses of nuclear weapons which are allowed by Just War theory, for example the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to prevent worse suffering? Can there be a theory of Just Deterrence?

‘Yes’ to the second proposition in each case. The deployment of nuclear weapons corrupts culture at its source. The rocket-pad from which nuclear weapons are launched is the human mind. The very term ‘deterrence’ is an evasion. It apparently sweetens what is a very foul thing. The deployment of nuclear weapons pollutes culture, it pollutes language, it pollutes children’s minds. In that sense I do accept the argument about intention.

More broadly, the deployment of nuclear weapons threatens the existence of the human species, and is immoral for that reason. What I have called ‘the ecological imperative of the species – survival’ must involve the rejection of them. My sympathies lie with people like the Greenham women, who really act this out in their lives. But I do accept that there are thoughtful and rational people who actually think that nuclear deterrence has prevented war, and I do not want to call that immoral as an attitude.

(v) Is there no relevant connection between the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and world poverty and disease?

‘Yes’ to the proposition on the right-hand side, although nuclear weapons are only part of this. In general, what is so pernicious is the whole cold war system, together with its armament industries and military infrastructures, through which both blocs try to infiltrate, pervert, and turn to their own advantage, every indigenous movement in the Third World.
(vi) Does Christian teaching allow the deployment of nuclear weapons? OR Does Christian teaching condemn the deployment of nuclear weapons?

Christianity is such a contradictory historical phenomenon. The deployment of nuclear weapons is certainly un-Christian according to the sort of belief that William Blake had—and Blake is one of my heroes. But, on the other hand, one also comes across some horrific apologists for war in the Christian tradition. So I think I'll leave this to the Christians.

Recommendations

1 Yes.
2 Yes (See A2(A)(v)).
3 Yes.
4 Yes.
5 Yes (See A2(A)(vii)).
6 Yes (See B(vi)).
7 Yes (See A2(A)(vi)).
8 Yes (See A2(B)).
9 No comment. But see A2(B)(iii).
10 Yes.
11 Yes (See B(iii)).
12 Yes (See B(iv)).
13 Yes.
14 Yes (See B(vi)).
15 Yes.
16 Yes (See C1).
17 No. The recommendations of the Alternative Defence Commission¹ as to strictly defensive armaments should be taken into account by the Ministry of Defence.
18 No. The best solution would be for NATO to expel the United States. Failing that, Britain should do as she pleases, and challenge NATO to expel her.
19 Yes. All American military facilities should be removed (See C2(ii)).
20 No.

Biographical Note

Born in 1917, Caspar Weinberger graduated at Harvard in 1938, and then served with the US Army in the Pacific between 1941 and 1945. He was a member of the California State Legislature, 1952-1958, and subsequently Vice-Chairman, then Chairman, of the California Republican Party Central
Committee, 1960-1964. From 1970 to 1975 he served successively as Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Counsellor to the President, and Secretary for Health, Education and Welfare. He was with Bechtel Corporation between 1975 and 1980. Since 1981 he has been Secretary of Defense.

Editorial Comment

The Secretary of Defense prepared these answers in response to the questions sent to him, and has given permission for them to be published. They represent the thinking of the person most immediately in charge of Western strategic defences, and therefore reflect constraints and pressures, which are, perhaps, not easily appreciated by those, particularly in Western Europe, who do not carry that responsibility. It is at once striking, for example, that the Secretary of Defense does not recognize a distinction between 'Global' and 'NATO' perspectives. The threat posed by the nature of the Soviet régime, and the disproportionate strength of Soviet forces, is the global setting for all defence considerations. It is the Soviet non-nuclear military advantage which necessitates a continuing nuclear component in Western defence strategy (see, for example, the answers to questions A2(B)(i), B(ii) and B(iii)); and it is the massive and sustained build-up of Soviet strategic and theatre nuclear forces, particularly during the 1970s, which necessitates the modernization of the Western nuclear deterrent (see, for example, the answers to questions A1(iv), A1(v), A2(A)(i), A2(A)(iv), and the charts accompanying the answer to question B(iv)). In general, the idea that the strengthening of the Western deterrent makes its use more likely is rejected, and it is maintained that, on the contrary, it is only Soviet perception of its manifest potency that can protect Western freedom and independence, assure future stability and prevent both nuclear and non-nuclear war.

CASPAR WEINBERGER

A Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945? - OR - Has it mainly been other factors?

It would be difficult to argue that the existence of nuclear weaponry has not been essential both to continued peace and to the political freedom of our NATO allies – particularly if one considers continuing Soviet efforts to build overwhelming conventional forces. The Soviets' brutal suppression of democratic movements within the Warsaw Pact and their adventurism elsewhere
around the world serve as stark reminders of what the Soviet leadership will do when it believes the risk to the USSR is low. Further, in any such discussion, one must remember that, given Soviet determination to build nuclear weapons and refusal to forgo them when the US offered to do so through the Baruch plan,1 there has never been, in reality, a choice for Western nations as to possession of nuclear weapons.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second strike strategic nuclear force prevent war? – OR – Does the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation, particularly against a similarly armed enemy, lack credibility and invite sub-deterrent encroachment?

In our present world, our possession of a secure retaliatory force is critical to preventing Soviet attack. It is important that the Soviet leaders should not perceive that they could attack the United States or her Allies successfully. Our forces and plans must be adequate to respond appropriately to any level of Soviet aggression, and hence deter any attack. A mix of flexible options, each of which would provide a credible and effective response to a potential Soviet attack is necessary, therefore. This means that we must have adequate conventional forces to be able to pose a credible deterrent to Soviet non-nuclear attack as well as possessing flexible nuclear capabilities. In the future, we may be able to reduce the requirement for nuclear retaliatory forces if we are able to develop and deploy effective defenses against ballistic missiles.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? – OR – Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has 'flexible response' dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

Flexible response – the ability to respond appropriately to any level of Soviet aggression – has been the cornerstone of the free world’s deterrent posture since the 1960s. It clearly has worked.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? – OR – Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

We have designed a force posture, the Triad,2 to minimize the chance that an unforeseen technical breakthrough would destroy our deterrent, and in this

1. The proposal presented by Bernard Baruch on behalf of the US Government at the first meeting of the Atomic Energy Commission in 1946 to hand over all potential nuclear war-making activities to an international authority, and to destroy existing stocks of nuclear weapons. The USSR turned the proposal down, probably on the grounds that it would make US technological superiority in that area permanent.
2. Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles, and munitions dropped or launched by Long-Range Bombers.
sense, a diverse force structure adds to stability. In any discussion of stability, however, it is important to distinguish between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States had unquestioned nuclear superiority for many years after World War II. We did not have any political desire to attack the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union could not attack us. That was stability in a very real sense. Today, the democracies of the West still have no reason to attack the Soviet Union. Further, we believe that there could be no winners in a nuclear war, and that such a war must never be fought. For stability, we must ensure that Soviet leaders also understand this basic fact. Unfortunately, some of the Soviet weapons—such as the powerful SS-18 missile—are designed explicitly to destroy United States forces and prevent a United States response, and they have been deployed in such numbers as to pose a clear first strike threat to America's land-based systems. Such Soviet forces clearly threaten stability. Thus it is both the type of systems deployed, and the number of those systems which affect strategic stability. As a result, our arms reductions proposals seek not only to reduce dramatically the size of the American and Soviet nuclear arsenals, but to place particular limits on the more destabilizing systems.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? — OR — Have ideas of 'nuclear defense' and 'parity' proved illusory and is 'multilateral negotiation from strength' a contradiction in terms? Has 'arms-control' been just another name for the arms race?

Previously negotiated arms control agreements did not restrain effectively Soviet strategic programs. After a decade of relative neglect—in which the Soviet Union built new and more powerful strategic forces deliberately designed to upset the strategic balance—the United States has determined to modernize United States strategic forces precisely to redress a developing imbalance. Such an imbalance, if allowed to persist, could undermine stability. Contrary to critics' charges, the United States modernization program is not designed to produce strategic superiority, nor will it; it will however, restore a strategic balance. At the same time, the President has proposed deep, mutual and verifiable reductions in strategic forces. Such reductions, particularly in the more threatening systems, could lead to an increase in stability.

(vi) Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? — OR — Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

Strategic weapons systems have very long lives—during which both technology and policy may change. Capabilities of systems developed several decades ago may, in fact, not meet current policy goals. For instance, the hardening of key Soviet installations requires modernized United States weapons to hold these
targets at risk and to continue thereby to deter the Soviet leadership effectively. As a general rule, however, United States weapons development has been led by policy requirements and not the other way around (and, I believe, Soviet development of a first strike force posture resulted from Soviet military policy and doctrine). In the Reagan Administration we have made a particular point of ensuring that our force modernization decisions are tailored specifically to achieving national policy objectives. We have also sought to make certain that our acquisition programs provide weapons systems that, over their expected lifetimes, will serve policy interests.

2 The Prospect for the Future

(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? – OR – Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

As in questions of stability, one must distinguish between the West and the Soviet Union in considering the first strike issue. Even when it had a first strike capability, the U.S. did not attack the Soviet Union. Today, it is inconceivable that any Western leader could believe that he could attack the Soviet Union and avoid retaliation. Given their vastly different motives, Communist leaders must remain persuaded that they could not attack the United States and avoid retaliation. The SS-18 and follow-on Soviet missiles are an obvious effort to pose precisely that type of threat – an attempt to destroy the United States systems which would be required for effective retaliation. The United States modernization program is intended to defeat such attempts by reducing the overall vulnerability of United States forces. The answer, then, is that the threat of a Soviet first strike will be low – provided that the West modernizes its strategic deterrent.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? – OR – Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

It is fundamental to deterrence that we must be able confidently to detect and assess a Soviet attack and then respond effectively. While our capabilities today support effective use of our forces, programmed C³ (Command, Control and Communications) improvements are designed to both improve and extend reliable control of our strategic forces into the future.

(iii) If, nevertheless, there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end
The course of a war, once begun, is uncertain. It is not possible to be certain that our efforts to limit escalation and terminate a conflict once begun would succeed. But it is imperative that we take every step possible both to deter war and to limit the destruction of any conflict, despite all our efforts to prevent it. Without credible limited options, our critics’ view that any response to a Soviet attack would automatically lead to mutual suicide could become a tragic self-fulfilling prophecy. In short, while our policy cannot guarantee success, our critics’ policy can only guarantee failure. Deterrence must not fail at any level.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theater nuclear systems reinforce deterrence? - OR - Do new battlefield and theater weapons threaten a dangerous lowering of the nuclear threshold?

Theater nuclear systems, like strategic systems, also require modernization to counter the many years of unconstrained Soviet deployments of such systems at the SS-20. Again, there must not be a Soviet perception of Allied weakness to invite aggression at any level. Further to the question, however, modernized theater nuclear systems do not lower the nuclear threshold. To argue that they would implies that both the use of non-strategic nuclear weapons does not carry great risk, and that the use of modern nuclear weapons is easier to contemplate than was the case with the systems they replace. Neither is true. As the answer to question A2(A)(iii) indicates, the use of any nuclear weapons is fraught with profound uncertainties which can be balanced only by the extreme consequences which would befall the West if those weapons were not used to halt Soviet aggression. As a result, the key is to defer any such questions by continuing to deter Soviet aggression at any level. As a final point, it is important to note that, by improving its conventional capabilities across the board, NATO is actually seeking to raise the nuclear threshold.

(v) Does the Strategic Defense Initiative offer the hope of an effective defense against nuclear weapons? - OR - Is the Strategic Defense Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlines in 1?

The Strategic Defense Initiative is essential if we are ever to free the world of the threat of nuclear war. SDI is a research initiative whose goal is to destroy weapons after they are launched. Since such research, should it prove fruitful, would remove rather than increase an aggressor’s incentive to attack it is clearly not ‘destabilizing’.

(vi) Is the threat of ‘horizontal’ nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? - OR - Is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers
bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

Both the United States and the Soviet Union discourage the proliferation of nuclear weaponry. Both nations encourage others to join them as signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and both support the oversight roles of the International Atomic Energy Agency. These responsible actions by both the United States and the Soviet Union should continue.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? – OR – Is ‘arms-control’ an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

Multilateral arms control efforts may bear fruit in certain areas. The central dilemma of the nuclear balance can only be resolved by the United States and the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Leaders truly are prepared to agree to deep, mutual, verifiable reductions then we are ready to work with them to reduce dramatically nuclear weapons on both sides.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely? – OR – Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?

Total nuclear disarmament – in the face of Soviet conventional force superiority – would be a highly dangerous, destabilizing, policy for the West because we would not retain an adequate deterrent to Soviet conventional aggression. Nuclear weapons are only part of the overall problem faced by the West. The central feature of this problem is that the Soviet leadership considers democracy and freedom anathema, and that, in the absence of high risk to themselves, they are prepared to use military force against those who enjoy the fruits and blessings of liberty.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war? – OR – Is conventional war, however terrible, preferable to nuclear war?

This question attempts to set a level of ‘desirability’ for either conventional or nuclear war. No war is ‘preferable’. Conventional war could be devastating on a scale not yet experienced by humanity. We must have the strength to deter all plausible aggression against our Alliance.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out? – OR – As with nerve gases in the last
war, would there be no incentive to resort to capabilities which the other side has as well?

Same as (ii).

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility? – OR – Is to argue that even multilateral nuclear disarmament is not desirable to give up all hope of a rational world-order?

As long as the Soviet Union poses a military threat to the West, we must maintain a deterrent which will assure, to the maximum degree possible, that the Soviet leaders must never decide to attack us. Global nuclear disarmament which did nothing to remove the Soviet non-nuclear threat to the Free World would be a dangerous, destabilizing step.

B Nato Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? – OR – Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?

The Soviet Union maintains an extremely large standing army which provides a dangerous degree of military superiority in Europe. Soviet investment in all areas of military force continues, including such capabilities as chemical and biological warfare – which they deploy in violation of treaty. The Allies must therefore continue to modernize conventional capabilities to ensure that deterrence of conventional attack does not fail.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power which will take advantage of unilateral Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control agreements by Western determination and strength? – OR – Is the Soviet Union an encircled and threatened power trying to keep up with Western technology and likely to respond positively to unconditional offers of Western restraint within a general context of detente?

Clearly the former. Soviet actions after World War II and today in Asia, Africa, and Central America confirm Communist ideological intent to expand throughout the world. The Soviets have clearly demonstrated that they are restrained only by Western unity and strength.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional preponderance such that NATO must continue to be able to threaten early use of nuclear weapons? – OR – Is NATO dependence on the early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary and strategically suicidal?

The whole goal of Flexible Response is to deter by maintaining a credible capability to respond appropriately to any level of Soviet attack. The West
Caspar Weinberger

will certainly attempt to meet aggression with conventional forces, but cannot forgo the possible use of nuclear weapons in the face of a major attack by Soviet forces. Given the massive nature of Soviet forces, the West must continue to rely on nuclear weapons as an essential element of deterrence. The Soviets must not see any possibility for success in initiating a war, conventional or nuclear.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal threaten the delicate theater and strategic balance? Would Western failure to match Soviet systems be destabilizing? – OR – Does the West initiate nearly all phases of the nuclear arms race and continue to enjoy a substantial lead in most areas? Is the nuclear ‘overkill’ such that the West could offer a nuclear ‘freeze’ or unconditional cuts without risk?

As the attached charts indicate, it is simply not true that the United States has initiated developments in what the question calls ‘the nuclear arms race’. The massive growth in Soviet nuclear capabilities, clearly designed to achieve a first strike capability, threatens the entire global balance, and can only be offset by Western modernization. A nuclear freeze would codify the current Soviet advantages, and could result, therefore, in a less stable world. Unilateral cuts by the West would have a similar effect, although their destabilizing nature would be felt far more quickly than would those of a nuclear freeze. Furthermore, either a freeze or unilateral cuts would remove any Soviet incentives to negotiate seriously for mutual arms reductions.

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Introduction of selected systems by year

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- Titan II
- Minuteman II
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- Poseidon C-3
- Trident I(C-4)
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(v) Are NATO 'forward defense' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence? — OR — Should NATO exploit her lead in 'emerging technology' to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

The NATO forward defense strategy is designed to prevent the Soviet Union from perceiving that it can attack NATO successfully without major military risk. As such it is an essential element of NATO's deterrence of war. The US and other NATO nations are, in fact, exploring the possible benefits that might accrue from emerging technologies. Highly capable conventional weapons can, for instance, better deter the Soviets by increasing the prob-
ability that NATO could deny Soviet war aims — and lessen Western reliance upon nuclear weaponry at the same time. It is not justifiable to call weapons which would help blunt a Soviet attack which was already in progress 'provocative'. Nor can it reasonably be suggested that NATO, using forward defense and deep strike, poses a conventional military threat to the Soviet Union or the Warsaw Pact.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theater nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported? — OR — Is it domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon free zone?

The fundamental problem which lead to the creation of the NATO alliance was that the Soviet Union was taking over the countries of Eastern Europe, and free nations of Western Europe could not expect to defend themselves from a Soviet attack without American involvement. The forward deployment of American forces guarantees the Soviet Union that they will indeed face full American involvement in the defense of Europe. The physical presence of American troops has helped deter the Soviets for over forty years. It is difficult to see how Europe — or America — would be safer without the NATO Alliance. It is even more difficult to see how Europe would remain free from Soviet coercion.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defenses? — OR — Are unilateral initiatives as part of a general programme of nuclear disarmament the only way to reverse the arms race? Is talk of 'multilateral disarmament' insincere in the mouths of those who reject all suggestion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a Nuclear Freeze, a European Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, or a declaration of No First Use?

Unilateral disarmament would not provide any incentive for the Soviets to reduce their forces. Responsible arms control policies leading to mutual verifiable reductions could well increase the security of the entire world. Calls for unilateral disarmament — which can only be voiced in the West — are simply not productive or helpful. Neither a No First Use declaration, nor a Nuclear Freeze, nor a European Nuclear Weapon Free Zone are in the security interests of the West: all would serve to codify existing Soviet advantages.
c BRITISH POLICY

1 THE BRITISH DETERRENT

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail? - OR - Would all possible uses of Britain's 'deterrent' be suicidal? Is its only effect to ensure Soviet targeting?

First, one should have no illusion that if the Soviet Union uses nuclear weapons against the Alliance, some NATO countries would not be targeted - regardless of the presence or absence of nuclear weapons on their soil. Further, much of Britain's nuclear capability is at sea and cannot be easily destroyed. That capability is a very powerful guarantor of British freedom - and contributes significantly to the overall security of the West.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making? - OR - Is the 'second centre of decision making' an illusion when the weapons are dependent upon the US and there is no independent strategic role to be played? Are European allies unenthusiastic about a parochial British force likely to inhibit her commitment to European defense?

British nuclear forces are valuable to the entire Alliance because they provide an important part of NATO's overall deterrent capability. Britain's nuclear forces do play both an Alliance role and a genuinely independent one - both of which deter Soviet aggression. This case for the UK deterrent - and its modernization - was made quite conclusively in the two UK Ministry of Defence white papers with which we fully agree: 'The Future United Kingdom Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Force' (July 1980) and 'The United Kingdom Trident Programme' (March 1982).

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it? - OR - Are US forces committed anyway and independent British initiatives more likely to trigger Soviet retaliation than US involvement?

The NATO Alliance is based upon the shared capabilities of the members - each contributing to ensure the denial of Soviet war aims if required - to provide an overall deterrent to Soviet attack. The United States and Britain both contribute large forces - some of them nuclear, but all of them vital - to the Alliance. It is important that the Alliance as a whole remain strong and firmly committed for effective deterrence, and all Alliance capabilities, including nuclear, must be kept modern and effective.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defense role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive? - OR - Can Britain's nuclear forces...
only be afforded at the expense of conventional strength and of other more important economic priorities?

The United States government fully supports the continued existence of the United Kingdom independent deterrent. The firm commitment of British forces – both conventional and nuclear – is vital to the Alliance. The exact allotment of British resources is, of course, a question on which I defer to the British Government. In that regard, however, I would note the points in both the July 1980 MoD White Paper (‘No alternative use of British resources would provide a comparable strengthening of collaborative Alliance deterrence to aggression.’) and the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1983 (‘... no equivalent spending on conventional weapons could possibly have the same value [as the UK Trident] in preventing war or offer a better assurance for the long term’). So I would agree the cost of the British deterrent is small in view of the role it plays.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe? – OR – Does the British deterrent encourage proliferation and do nothing to enhance British prestige? Would British disarmament within the context outlined in B help to break the nuclear log-jam?

First, unilateral British nuclear disarmament would not provide any incentive for any other government to reciprocate. Second, there is a need to deter the Soviet Union, not France. Nor does any UK/French contest for Western European nuclear ascendancy exist. Finally, unilateral nuclear disarmament by any of the Western allies would undercut NATO’s overall deterrent posture – it would greatly weaken the West’s military capabilities without reducing the threat posed by Soviet nuclear and conventional forces.

(vi) Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defense into the 21st century? – OR – Would commitment to Trident exacerbate all the drawbacks listed above?

Yes, investment in Trident is the best way to ensure effective British strategic defense into the 21st century.

2 NATO FORCES AND US BASES

(i) Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the Alliance? – OR – Should British obligations to NATO be met by strengthening conventional forces where necessary within an overall non-nuclear strategy as recommended in B?

The British contributions to NATO – both conventional and nuclear – must
be considered from an Alliance viewpoint. They are essential. Regrettably, faced with Soviet conventional and nuclear capabilities, the Alliance does not have the option to resort to a full non-nuclear strategy.

(ii) *Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defense of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible? – OR – Do the large numbers of nuclear facilities yielded to the US erode British sovereignty? Would their removal do no more than restore a normal peacetime relationship?*

U.S. presence in Europe – at significant cost to this country – is intended both to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that America is firmly committed to NATO defense and to give us the advantages of forward deployment for our defending forces. Should any NATO nation request withdrawal of American support, it would send a signal to Moscow that NATO unity – absolutely essential to deterrence – could be fragmented. The United States does not – and has no desire or intention to – intrude in internal British affairs or impair British sovereignty in any way. This applies equally to US forces based in the UK as well as to US foreign policy.

(iii) *Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she unilaterally disarms? – OR – Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any super-power confrontation unless bases are removed?*

Britain possesses military and industrial power. There is no reason to believe that, should the Soviet Union use nuclear weapons in attacking the West, Britain would be spared gratuitously. Rather, schemes such as unilateral disarmament and foregoing Allied support could only fracture Alliance unity and heighten Soviet perceptions of military success – thereby weakening deterrence.

(iv) *Can non-nuclear defenses only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? – OR – In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US ‘umbrella’ than any other Western ally – or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?*

One must state up front that NATO can in no way be compared to the Warsaw Pact. NATO nations freely agree to cooperate in common defense against possible Soviet aggression. The non-Soviet Warsaw Pact nations do not ‘depend’ upon the Soviet Union for defense against a threat that the West does not pose. They are forced to submit to Soviet hegemony due solely to brute Soviet force. Not only can Britain, freely joined in the NATO Alliance, depend upon the US, but the US depends upon Britain. It is foolish to speak of a
'nuclear free Europe, decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation'; it is the political and military threat posed by the USSR to the free nations of Western Europe which is a major cause of super-power tensions, and not the other way around.

**Moral Considerations**

The policy of the Western nations is to jointly preserve their freedoms and cultural values while preventing aggression and war – all war. The security provided by a strong defense provides the environment in which education, business, religion and freedom can flourish. Even conventional war would be devastating to all our nations, and all of these areas would suffer greatly if war erupted. It would be a cruel 'economy' to jeopardize our national values by weakening our deterrence of the Soviet Union. In that our policy seeks to prevent war, and to ensure the continued existence of the Western political tradition which fosters and protects individual and human rights, democratic government and religious freedom and toleration, it is clearly and manifestly a most moral policy.

**Recommendations**

*NOTE* These recommendations have been deduced by the editor from the text (except for No. 3), and appropriate references have been given. They were not made by the Secretary of Defense himself.

1. No (See B(iv) & B(vii)).
2. No (See A2(A)(v)).
3. No, because the introduction of modern safety and security devices into the two-thirds of our stockpiled weapons that do not yet have them would be halted by a test ban (Quoted in the *Times* September 11, 1986).
4. No (See B(iii) & B(vii)).
5. Yes, if the cuts are mutual and verifiable (See A2(A)(vii)).
6. No (See B(vi) and B(vii)).
7. Yes (See A2(A)(vi)).
8. No (See A2(B)(i)).
9. Does not apply.
10. No (See A2(A)(v)).
11. No (See B(iii)).
12. No (See B(iv) & B(vii)).
13. No (See B(i)).
14. No (See A2(A)(iv) & C2(ii)).
15. No (See B(vi) & B(vii)).
16. No (See CI).
17. Does not apply (See CI(iv)).
18 In present circumstances the Alliance does not have the option to resort to a full non-nuclear strategy (See C2(i)).
19 No (See C2(i) & C2(ii)).
20 Does not apply.
Biographical Note

Born in 1931, George Younger read Modern History at New College, Oxford, and, from 1950, served with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in the Regular and Territorial Army. He was elected Conservative MP for Ayr in 1964. Following the general election of 1970 he was appointed Parliamentary
Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office, later serving as Minister of State for Defence. In Opposition between 1974 and 1979 he was, among other things, Chief Opposition Spokesman on Defence (1975-1976). From 1979 to January 1986 he was Secretary of State for Scotland, and has been Secretary of State for Defence since then.

Editorial Comment

These answers were communicated in an interview in the Ministry of Defence on December 16, 1986. The reader is presented here with a complete rationale for current policy. In Section A1 the Secretary of State gives a reasoned exposition of what he calls ‘Mutual Assured Deterrence’. In Section A2(A) he refutes the suggestion that current policy is likely to lead to a greater risk of instability. In Section A2(B) he rejects global nuclear disarmament as a desirable short-term option for reasons further explained in the answers to questions B(i) and B(ii). Particularly important here is the justification for NATO's Flexible Response and Deep Strike strategies to be found in the answers to questions B(iii) and B(v). The modernization of Britain’s independent nuclear forces is defended in Section C1, while the criticism in the answers to questions C2(i) and C2(ii) of Opposition proposals to move towards non-nuclear defence within NATO Alliance should be seen against the background of answers such as those to questions B(vi) and B(vii).

THE RT. HON. GEORGE YOUNGER

A Global Policy

1 The History of the Past Forty Years

(i) Has it been nuclear deterrence that has kept the peace between the great powers since 1945?

No doubt many factors have contributed to the preservation of peace between the great powers during the past forty years. But, given the tensions that exist between East and West, and in particular the huge imbalance of conventional forces, it would be wrong to overlook the part that fear of nuclear retaliation has played in ensuring that tensions did not spill over into war. For the past forty years our security has depended on nuclear weapons. And it still does.

(ii) Does mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force prevent war?

Mutual possession of an invulnerable second-strike strategic nuclear force is the ultimate underpinning of deterrence. But on its own it is not enough to
ensure the prevention of war. If all we had was the American strategic nuclear deterrent, the Soviet Union might be tempted to contemplate adventure at lower levels on the grounds that the leap to a full strategic nuclear exchange would be too disproportionate for the United States to risk. It might lack credibility.

(iii) Have limited nuclear options at strategic and theatre levels enhanced deterrence by dramatically raising the threshold between peace and war? OR Have most military planners from the start been aiming for nuclear war-fighting superiority? Has ‘flexible response’ dangerously lowered the threshold between conventional and nuclear war?

That is why, ever since the tripwire strategy ceased to be credible, the West has regarded a range of nuclear options within a strategy of flexible response as essential for effective deterrence. The importance of a graduated capability of this kind is that it denies the Soviet Union the perception that it might be possible to secure a swift advantage at one level without incurring unacceptable damage in reply.

To attempt to infer from this that, by doing this, NATO is planning for nuclear war, is to try to make a false distinction. Deterrence is only effective when the enemy perceives that you have the capability and the will to carry out your threat if he ignores it. The purpose behind our dispositions is the prevention of war, and it can be done in no other way. Flexible response has added credibility to the deterrent.

(iv) Has the size and variety of the nuclear arsenals held by the superpowers stabilized deterrence? OR Has the logic of nuclear confrontation and worst-case analysis generated a dangerous and strategically pointless superfluity of weapons systems?

Within these terms, it is important that nuclear arsenals are diverse enough to offer these options. Extended deterrence demands more than a minimum strategic force. Looked at globally, the size of current arsenals is excessive, which is why, among other things, we favour fifty percent cut in strategic weapons on both sides. But that is not to say that it is dangerous. Deterrence is stable.

(v) Has the idea of nuclear balance between the superpowers been essential to stability and have arms-control negotiations helped to achieve it? OR Have ideas of ‘nuclear defence’ and ‘parity’ proved illusory and is ‘multilateral negotiation from strength’ a contradiction in terms? Has ‘arms-control’ been just another name for the arms race?

The idea of balance is an important one. The West is not aiming for nuclear superiority, but for balance. That does not mean exact parity, system by system, in any mechanical way; it means a balance of Mutual Assured Deterrence. Arms control contributes by helping to orchestrate this. It facilitates mutual understanding of how the system works, and curbs escalation and proliferation. But we must not suppose that arms control is a substitute for proper defence, nor that it can achieve anything very significant unless carried
on within a wider context of military and political negotiation. We must not become so preoccupied with nuclear weapon number counting that we neglect the broader situation which gives nuclear weapons their significance.

**(vi)** Has force-planning been controlled by strategic thinking? \ OR Has the self-reinforcing impetus of technology and vested interest dictated policies subsequently justified post hoc?

We must not let technology drive policy. Nor must we allow it to undermine stability. There is always a threat that this might happen, which is why it must be firmly controlled. But the idea of those represented on the right-hand side here that there is a runaway system is a gross exaggeration. In general, force-planning is controlled by strategic thinking. Despite what a number of the critics seem to suggest, it is, in fact, in the Soviet Union, rather than in the West, that political restraint on military spending is harder to achieve.

2. **The Prospect for the Future**

**(A) WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

(i) Does the threat of an enemy first strike remain inconceivable for the foreseeable future? \ OR Is there an increasing threat from accurate and time-urgent first-strike weapons?

For our part, we have undertaken quite clearly that there are no circumstances in which we will use any weapons first. But fear of an enemy first strike is to do with perceptions, and it is true that at times there are expressions of alarm on this score on both sides. But the fact is that there is nothing in the pipeline which is remotely likely to threaten the present perceived mutual inhibition against a first strike. The prospects for Mutual Assured Deterrence are stable.

(ii) Are command, control, communication and intelligence facilities likely to remain secure? \ OR Does the amount of information to be processed, pressure of time and fear of preemption put command and control systems under intolerable strain and make inadvertent war more likely?

I am surprised by those represented on the right-hand side here, who suggest that the modernization of command and control systems will make inadvertent war more likely. It seems to me that the reverse is the case. Had there been nuclear weapons in the days when Admiral Nelson set off on a six-month mission with no more communication than some brief instructions in his pocket, we would be in trouble. But the instantaneous communications that we have today prevent that.

(iii) If nevertheless there were a limited nuclear exchange would it be likely to end limited once it had broken out a dangerous illusion?

None of us can know what would happen if deterrence broke down. Clearly we have to make plans to limit the damage should that happen, and it would
be irresponsible not to do so. But it is absurd to criticize this as 'planning for limited nuclear war'. The purpose is to deter war, and the fear on both sides that, if deterrence failed, neither would be able to limit what the other did, is part of that deterrence. It is a potent component in ensuring that it does not fail. Our ability to make a flexible response is the best way of effecting this.

(iv) Do new generations of battlefield and theatre nuclear systems reinforce deterrence? Or do new battlefield and theatre weapons threaten a dangerous lowering of the nuclear threshold?

Given the threatened Soviet preponderance in Long Range Intermediate Nuclear Forces, the Western deployment of land-based Cruise and Pershing II missiles has clearly helped to stabilize deterrence. Failure to have done so is what would have been destabilizing. As to the possibility of a 'zero' option, in which all of these systems would be removed by both sides, if this could be achieved, we would of course, welcome it. Such an outcome would, of course, have implications for deterrence, and it would be essential to have adequate constraints on Soviet shorter-range intermediate forces.

(v) Does the Strategic Defence Initiative offer the hope of an effective defence against nuclear weapons? Or is the Strategic Defence Initiative simply the most recent and destabilizing example of the process outlined in i?

It is hard to believe that Mr Gorbachev expected the proposals on SDI that he made at Reykjavik to be accepted. They would have placed severe new constraints on US research while comparable Soviet activities remained unacknowledged. SDI is only a research programme. We cannot yet tell what options it may open up—or whether it is going to produce anything at all. But we must continue to explore the possibilities that technology offers, because, as has often been demonstrated in the past, these may turn out to enhance our security. The essential question is whether defensive systems have a role to play in maintaining deterrence and ensuring strategic stability, or whether we should continue to deter strategic nuclear attack solely by the threat of retaliation.

But the programme should be conducted within the terms jointly endorsed by the President and the Prime Minister at Camp David two years ago. It has been made clear that, in its research phase, it will not infringe existing agreements, such as the ABM treaty, and that, if and when it comes to deployment, this will be subject to negotiation, both with Allies, and with the Soviet Union. The aim is to enhance deterrence.

(vi) Is the threat of 'horizontal' nuclear proliferation best met by a continuation of past policies? Or is continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence by the great powers bound to accelerate the process of proliferation and make nuclear war more likely?

We should go on containing the threat of nuclear weapon proliferation as we...
have done, surprisingly successfully, up until now. But I do not accept the link implied in the question on the right-hand side, between the continued reliance on nuclear deterrence by the existing nuclear powers, and the likelihood of the spread of nuclear weapons to others. If nuclear weapons could be abolished entirely, then proliferation would evidently be ended as part of it. But this is not going to happen. Short of that, I do not think that current nuclear deterrent policies affect the issue of proliferation.

(vii) Do multilateral arms-control negotiations offer the best prospect for future stability? OR Is ‘arms-control’ an illusion which diverts attention from the only safe policy – nuclear disarmament?

No real consensus has emerged on whether Reykjavik was a blind alley from which we must all now retreat, or a break-up in the ice-floes of arms control, or even a fundamental shift in the international security framework. I take a hopeful view. So far as concerns arms control, we would welcome fifty per cent reductions in strategic weapons, an INF agreement, and further constraints on weapon testing (the problem with a Comprehensive Test Ban, which we would otherwise favour, is verification). If Reykjavik proves to be a sign of a fundamental shift, then, as the Prime Minister and the President agreed the other day, this must include a settlement to the whole range of issues that divide East and West. If there is such a shift, how marvellous. But we must wait and see.

In the meantime, we can be confident that, if present policies are continued, deterrence will remain stable.

(B) WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(i) If nuclear arsenals were dismantled would war between the great powers again become a rational option and therefore more likely? OR Would nuclear disarmament remove the incentive for nuclear preemption while not affecting the reluctance of the great powers to initiate a third world war?

If Mr Gorbachev’s proposal to eliminate nuclear weapons by the year 2000 means leaving everything else as it is now, then clearly it is not desirable. The first worry would be that we would have no way of proving that Mr Gorbachev had in fact given up his nuclear weapons. And the second worry would be that in any case this would make the conventional imbalance very much more dangerous. It would be possible to concentrate troops for a conventional attack without having to fear a nuclear response. To replace the current situation of strategic stability with the unstable international environment that would result from a world made safe for conventional war is not an attractive proposition.

(ii) Would a major conventional war be likely OR Is conventional war, however terrible, in itself to be as terrible as a limited nuclear war?

A conventional war in Europe today, even in the unlikely event that it remained at the conventional level, would, indeed, be terrible. It is important
to remember that what properly maintained nuclear deterrence does is to ensure the prevention of war of all kinds. It is a serious mistake to concentrate so much on nuclear weapons all the time that we overlook the appalling threat of modern conventional war.

(iii) Because nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented would they not be bound to be used sooner or later once war had broken out? OR As with nerve gases in the last war, would there be no incentive to resort to capabilities which the other side has as well?

But, since we cannot uninvent nuclear weapons, were a conventional war to break out in this way, then both sides would be hurrying to redevelop them. Hasty nuclear disarmament makes nuclear war more, not less, likely.

(iv) Is global nuclear disarmament only feasible in a world where war itself is no longer a possibility? OR Is to argue that even multilateral nuclear disarmament is not desirable to give up all hope of a rational world-order?

The vision of a non-nuclear world, to which we should all aspire as an ultimate goal for general disarmament, should not be allowed to obscure what we need for effective deterrence now, or the modest but real steps that we can take to secure reductions in weapon levels and improve East-West relations. It would be nice to wish away both the Soviet threat and the need for a nuclear deterrent. That would be the best of all possible worlds. But, until such dreams have more substance than they do at present, we shall continue to depend on nuclear weapons to ensure our security. We must work towards our goal painstakingly, realistically, and responsibly. To rush recklessly ahead towards some supposed Utopia is to put our security at risk.

(v) Is peace only preserved when we are seen to be prepared for war, as failure before 1939 and success since 1945 show? Under likely future conditions would global nuclear disarmament make war, including nuclear war, more likely? OR Do the years before 1914 show what happens when military planning and the arms race control political choices? Do present strategies make nuclear war almost inevitable under likely future conditions? Is global nuclear disarmament the only rational policy?

I do not see our situation today as comparable to that in 1914. Nuclear deterrence is stable. It is not a system which is running out of control. The key difference in the nuclear age is that nuclear war is totally unacceptable to all decision-makers in all countries, and for that reason they will do almost anything to avoid it. In 1914 there were a number of advisers recommending war. Today that is no longer the case.

b NATO Policy

(i) Does the Soviet Union, together with her Warsaw Pact allies, enjoy a strategically dangerous military superiority in Europe? OR Are NATO and WTO forces relatively evenly matched?
The Soviet threat is the starting point for all we do in defence. There can be no doubt that, at the moment, there is a serious non-nuclear military imbalance between the two sides, and those who deny this are, for whatever reason, simply ignoring the facts. Soviet spending on armed forces has risen by some sixty percent in real terms over the past fifteen years and is still rising. As the annual White Paper makes clear, and indeed other publications (for instance, the recently published IISS assessment), we are speaking of a wide imbalance in terms of numbers of men and divisions in favour of the Warsaw pact, a two-to-one advantage in numbers of main battle tanks and of fix-wing tactical aircraft, a three-to-one advantage in artillery, and so on. The Soviet navy is smaller, but more than enough to disrupt vital transatlantic supply routes. These are ready forces. We must also consider the Soviet ability to create even greater local superiority by a sudden massing of troops, and her longer-term advantage in reinforcement and supply. In addition, there is the near Soviet monopoly in chemical weapons. To say this is not to be alarmist. NATO has certainly made progress in strengthening her conventional forces. But the serious non-nuclear military imbalance is an undeniable fact. To ignore it, for example to try to claim that the two sides are evenly matched, is an irresponsible refusal to recognize the reality of the world we are living in.

(ii) Is the Soviet Union an expansionist power OR Is the Soviet Union an encircled and which will take advantage of unilateral threatened power trying to keep up with Western concessions and is only restrained and forced to accept arms-control and likely to respond agreements by Western determination and Western restraint within a general context strength? of detente?

We must not, of course, confuse what we know of Soviet capabilities, with what we can only guess about Soviet intentions. I do not think, for example, that the Soviet Union has any direct desire to attack the West. But two points need to be made here. First, Soviet ideological hostility towards the West remains fundamentally unchanged. It is no more than stating the facts to say that, because the Soviet system depends upon repression, the free West is a standing threat to its continued existence. Secondly, there is the Soviet record. This shows that the way to handle the Soviet Union is to be strong and united, while at the same time exploring the possibilities for mutual accommodation and agreement. It is striking that in those areas in which the West has been relatively weaker, there has been no incentive for the Soviet Union to give anything away. It is disappointing that after thirteen years, agreement has not been reached at the MBFR¹ negotiations, nor have the negotiations for a global ban on chemical weapons so far produced concrete results. This contrasts with the situation where the introduction of Cruise and Pershing II has led to suggestions of a mutual giving up of INF weapons. The fundamental factor remains the underlying imbalance in non-nuclear forces. While that remains

¹. The Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks which have been going on since 1973 in Vienna between the WTO and NATO countries.
so, we do not want to depend for our security on Soviet good will – on some
vague supposition that the Soviet Union does not intend to take advantage
of her superiority. We do know that the forces exist. We do not know what
Soviet intentions are. Prudent and responsible defence in the West has to
make proper provision accordingly.

(iii) Is Soviet chemical and conventional
preponderance such that NATO must
continue to be able to threaten early use of
nuclear weapons?

Flexible response is the only credible strategy for the West in the face of the
Soviet threat as it now stands. As the statement issued after the recent meeting
between the President and the Prime Minister made clear, it will continue to
require effective nuclear deterrence based on a mix of options. But two popular
misconceptions need to be corrected here.

In the first place, flexible response includes conventional as well as nuclear
options. NATO keeps open the option of using nuclear weapons in order to
deter the Soviet Union – but that does not mean that this would have to be
invoked at any particular stage of a conventional conflict were deterrence
nevertheless to fail. It could be that we would be able to hold a conventional
attack with conventional forces. That would clearly be our aim. The nuclear
option remains precisely that – an option. Secondly, the reason for keeping
the option open is in order to deter. It is to demonstrate to the Soviet leaders
that they cannot undertake aggression against NATO territory without put-
ting their own homeland, their forces and those of their Warsaw Pact allies,
at risk. A ‘declaration of no first use’ of nuclear weapons would be counter-
productive and meaningless. It would be counter-productive insofar as it
weakened deterrence. And it would be meaningless for the same reason that
the Soviet declaration is meaningless – no matter what Soviet official spokes-
men may say, their nuclear forces are trained to preempt an anticipated attack.

The fundamental fact is that NATO is a purely defensive alliance. We have
made the only significant declaration – that we will not use any
weapon first.

(iv) Does the growing size of the Soviet nuclear
arsenal threaten the delicate theatre and
strategic balance? Would Western failure
to match Soviet systems be destabilizing?

The West does not have to match the Soviet Union system-by-system, but
does need to make sure that the Soviet Union does not achieve a preponderance
at any one level, which might invite a dangerous attempt to exploit it. That is
why the West was right to respond to the Soviet build-up in LRINF forces.
Within these terms, although there is room for unilateral adjustments, such
as the current reductions being made in NATO's battlefield weapons, more sweeping unilateral moves would clearly be destabilizing.

(v) Are NATO 'forward defence' and 'deep strike' strategies essential for effective deterrence? Or should NATO exploit her lead in 'emerging technology' to explore less provocative alternative strategies?

It is militarily meaningless to make the kind of distinction between 'offensive' and 'defensive' weapons and strategies proposed by the critics represented in the right-hand column. In view of Soviet plans for concentrating massive successive waves of attack along a particular axis, NATO must be able to strike at the follow-on echelons, airfields, and lines of communication. But, once again, the crucial point is to do with deterrence. The enemy will only be deterred from attacking when he knows that, if he does, he will not be vulnerable only in the territory that he is occupying.

Emerging technologies are supplements to, not substitutes for, NATO's overall defence. They do, indeed, offer the hope of a significant strengthening of NATO non-nuclear forces, and therefore of a welcome deferral of the likelihood of having to invoke the nuclear option. That is why NATO is developing them. But they are no panacea. The gestation period for many of these systems is a long one, they are expensive, and, of course, the Soviet Union is also developing similar capabilities.

(vi) Is it the presence of American front-line troops and the tying-in of theatre nuclear forces to the American strategic deterrent that guarantees W. European security? Should American policies therefore be supported? Or is domination by the two super-powers that poses the greatest threat to European integrity? Would Europe be safer decoupled from the super-power nuclear confrontation? Should Europe be made a nuclear weapon-free zone?

It is indeed the presence of American front-line troops, and the tying-in of those troops, by whatever stages, to the American strategic deterrent, that continues to underpin Western security. We nearly lost two world wars because the Americans were not in. Their commitment to the security of Western Europe is now made tangible by their presence. But that is not, of course, to say that European states are going to see eye-to-eye with their ally on every issue. For one thing, the United States is a global power, and has no land frontier with the Soviet Union. There are bound to be differences of perspective. Unlike the Warsaw Pact, which is a vehicle for the imposition of Soviet control, NATO is a free association of partners for mutual advantage. It is also important to remember that the United States is not opposed to a stronger and more united Europe. On the contrary, many Americans would welcome it. The essential point is that, at a time of change, when it is possible that old Cold War configurations may be beginning to shift, it is all the more important that Western cohesion and strength is maintained. NATO needs to adapt, but must not lose the unity and sense of common purpose that has so far preserved our freedom. It is fundamental to Western security that the
Transatlantic Alliance remains strong. To put this at risk is to my mind irresponsibility of the worst kind.

(vii) Would Western unilateral nuclear disarmament invite Soviet blackmail? Are suggestions that the West should take the lead in offering unilateral disarmament initiatives the thin end of this wedge? Do radical nuclear disarmers consciously or unconsciously serve Soviet interests and threaten to undermine Western defences?

One-sided measures of the kind proposed in the right-hand column have failed in the past. The way forward is a combination of continued nuclear deterrence, together with bilateral and multilateral negotiations. This is a long and difficult road, but one which we must go on travelling down. Our policies have brought us to this point and are beginning to bear fruit. To make the kind of rash unilateral gestures that have been suggested in some quarters, would be to throw all of this in jeopardy. It would just create instability.

C British Policy

I The British Deterrent

(i) Is Britain's deterrent a weapon of last resort which guarantees her sovereignty and independence and protects her from nuclear blackmail?

Seen from a purely British point of view, the independent British nuclear deterrent is an ultimate safeguard against nuclear blackmail in a world of nuclear weapon powers. It is an ultimate option, but, for that reason, a remote one. Of more immediate significance, therefore, is the importance of the British deterrent within the Western Alliance. British nuclear forces are committed to NATO.

(ii) Are British nuclear forces valuable to European allies because they provide a specifically European second centre of decision making?

The fact that the British nuclear force is European, that is to say, non-American, is significant, because of its effect on Soviet perceptions. It is important that the Soviet planner sees that there is a European component to the Western nuclear deterrent, in case he might otherwise be tempted to suppose that the United States might be inhibited from using her nuclear forces in defence of Europe. It is a further complication for the planner. His work is not done
when he has made a judgement about America – he must also assess the threat from Britain and France. A British nuclear force also helps European partners to see the deterrent as not only an American contribution. It means that there is a diversification of commitment, from a country like Norway which would only allow nuclear weapons on to her soil in wartime; through those countries which allow American nuclear weapons on their soil; to Britain which also has her own forces. But this is not to suggest that a European force is an alternative to an American force. There are those who suggest that we should somehow unilaterally switch nuclear partners from the United States to France – with little or no consultation with either, it seems. But this would produce no advantage over our present arrangements and would probably end up being more expensive. The British and American nuclear forces are complementary within the overall framework of the Western Alliance.

(iii) Does the US favour shared responsibility and do British nuclear forces guarantee full US commitment to Europe and Soviet recognition of it?  

The United States favours a British force because it favours shared responsibility. It also fears that British unilateral nuclear disarmament will be part of a general down-grading of the British defence effort. We have had these forces for so long now that there is scepticism about claims that we can give them up and compensate by being all the more vigorous elsewhere. It would make NATO look like one great big daddy and a lot of little hens running behind. At the moment it is not like that. America is the biggest partner, certainly, but Britain is also one of the major contributors.

(iv) Is the cost of the British deterrent small in view of the vital defence role it plays? Are alternatives likely to be more expensive?  

Arguments about the cost of the British nuclear deterrent are a red herring. If it was not a nuclear weapon, nobody would be complaining that it was expensive. For example, Tornado is costing more, but there is no comparable ‘Ban the Tornado’ campaign. This is just a useful handle for the anti-nuclear brigade to hang their argument on.

(v) Would unilateral British nuclear disarmament have no effect on other countries and only serve to weaken British influence and allow France unchallenged ascendancy in Europe?  

If Britain gave up her independent deterrent, it would have no effect on the Soviet Union. The disparity in power is too great. The fact that at the time of Reykjavik Mr Gorbachev dropped the precondition that he had previously
been insisting on with regard to the British and French deterrents, shows that this had just been a ploy aimed at dividing the West.

Although it is not enough in itself to constitute a major reason for Britain to keep her deterrent, it is certainly true that it serves to give her an important measure of influence with the United States as the Camp David Accords showed.

(vi) *Is investment in Trident the best way to continue to ensure effective British strategic defence into the 21st century?*  

There can be no doubt that, for the role it has to play, Trident is the best system. Alternatives such as Cruise missiles would be more expensive — for example, to acquire a deterrent force based on Cruise missiles that would be as effective as one based on Trident could cost up to twice as much.

Nor will Trident represent an enormous escalation in firepower over Polaris. We have made it plain that we will not be using the full warhead-capacity. Our objective remains for it to be a minimum deterrent, although it has to be a rather larger minimum in order to get through what are now more sophisticated defences.

2 NATO Forces and US Bases

(i) *Must Britain continue to share responsibility for manning NATO nuclear systems upon which her security depends? Would refusal to do so fatally weaken the alliance?*  

This is of great importance. To refuse to do this would undoubtedly divide and weaken the Alliance, throwing the burden in particular onto the West Germans. It is nonsense to suggest that Britain's obligations to NATO can be met by 'strengthening conventional forces within an overall non-nuclear strategy'. There is no overall non-nuclear strategy, nor can there be while the situation is as it is.

(ii) *Would the forced withdrawal of US nuclear bases from Britain make US defence of the West impossible? Is American interference in British affairs negligible?*  

First of all, our sovereignty is not eroded. We have control over how American bases are used. No operation is conducted from an American base in Britain without the Prime Minister's approval — as the Libyan raid showed.

But, once again, the main thing to stress is that the Atlantic Alliance is the foundation on which European security is built. The transatlantic partnership is based on pragmatic mutual self-interest, underpinned by a common heritage, shared experience, and a joint commitment to the principles of freedom
and democracy. It is a unique bargain, and not one that we should take for granted. There are already signs of resurgent neo-isolationism in America, and a shift in US attention towards the Pacific basin, so that Europe is no longer the automatic first concern of many Americans today. If we put in doubt the value to America of its continued involvement in Europe — for example, by depriving their conventional forces of the nuclear umbrella they require to meet the Soviet threat — then we put in doubt also the foundations on which our security is based. It would be a profoundly misguided and irresponsible thing to do.

(iii) Will Britain continue to be targeted by Soviet warheads whether or not she disarms unilaterally? OR Is Britain seen as an American aircraft carrier and targeted by the USSR accordingly? Will Britain fall an early victim in any superpower confrontation unless bases are removed?

It is unrealistic to think that Britain could be a nuclear-free sanctuary, no matter what she did. Her geographical position alone means that she will be targeted.

(iv) Can non-nuclear defences only safely be afforded by powers prepared to shelter beneath the American strategic umbrella? OR In a nuclear-free Europe, decoupled from the superpower nuclear confrontation, would Britain no more expect to depend upon the US 'umbrella' than any other Western ally — or than Eastern Europe upon the USSR?

It means nothing for the Labour Party to say 'we are not going to shelter under the American nuclear umbrella'. This is empty rhetoric. The American umbrella is there, and is recognized as such on both sides of the Iron Curtain. It is only because of it that the Labour Party can indulge in the luxury of such a policy at all.

Moral Considerations

Any moral discussion must be founded on the realities that we face; including the existence of nuclear weapons, and the realities of the measures nations have historically been prepared to take in pursuit of their objectives, including war. The moral repugnance at the thought of the effects of nuclear weapons is understandable, and, indeed, right. That must be the starting-point for serious discussion of defence and deterrence. I believe that the aim of preventing war is a moral one; and that the Government's duty to ensure the security of the people is a moral one. As far as resources are concerned, of course we have to weigh up the consequences on other programmes of spending on defence; but, as one of my predecessors put it, 'Peace is expensive — but it is never as expensive as war.'
Recommendations

1 No, because this would freeze present imbalances, remove much of the incentive to achieve cuts, and be impossible to verify (SDE 1983, p8, para 2).

2 No (see A2(A)(v)).

3 No (see A2(A)(vii)).

4 No (see B(iii)).

5 No, we should concentrate efforts on reductions in United States and Soviet arsenals.

6 No, not in Europe, because it would be militarily meaningless (SDE 1983, p8, para 4).

7 Yes.

8 No, because the British Government believes that total nuclear disarmament could only contribute to security if it was accompanied by reductions in conventional arms as part of the process of general and complete disarmament. It does not seem likely that this is achievable by the end of the century (see A2(B)).

9 I do believe that it will be necessary for the United States to retain a minimum strategic force unless or until more effective means can be devised for maintaining Western security. But it is of course difficult to comment on the specific weapon system that such a minimum strategic force might be based on (see A1(iv)).

10 No (see A2(A)(v)).

11 No (see B(iii)).

12 No (see B(iv)).

13 No (see C1).

14 No (see A1(iii) etc).

15 No. See No. 6.

16 No (see C1).

17 Does not apply.

18 No (see C2(i)).

19 No (see C2(i) & C2(ii)).

20 Does not apply.

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