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THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND ARMS CONTROL

INTRODUCTION

Arms control policy affects the security of the United States enormously. The degree to which U.S. arms are limited or reduced by treaties can determine the capability of the U.S. not only to defend itself and its allies, but to deter war. An American President, therefore, must be able to reject arms agreements that are not in the national interest as well as accept those that are. He also must receive clear, realistic advice and analysis concerning the technical aspects of proposed agreements and their implications for U.S. security.

During the Reagan Administration, the State Department exercised a great deal of influence over the direction of U.S. arms control policy. Generally, the Department advocated a softer line than the Department of Defense or the National Security Council (NSC) staff during the many internal debates on arms control policy. Typical was the 1988 State Department position on interpreting the nature of Soviet violations of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. All government departments, including the State Department, believed that the construction of a huge radar by the Soviets at Krasnoyarsk in central Siberia was a technical violation of the ABM Treaty. The Pentagon argued that the violation constituted a "material breach" of the treaty — a violation so severe that it abrogated the treaty's basic guarantee of

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limiting strategic defenses. The State Department, by contrast, insisted that the Krasnoyarsk radar was a mere technical violation, requiring nothing more from Washington than further attempts to persuade the Soviets to comply with the treaty.

Also typical of the State Department's attitude was its opposition, during internal arms control debates in the early years of the Reagan Administration, to efforts by the Pentagon and other agencies to end U.S. compliance with the unratified 1979 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) II Treaty. The State Department's posture in all such arms control matters tends to emphasize good relations with U.S. allies, as well as the Soviet Union, at the expense of national security considerations.

White House Direction. George Bush can limit State Department influence on the arms control policy-making process in two ways: through choice of personnel and the distribution of arms control responsibilities. Political appointees who emphasize improved national security over good relations with the Soviets should be chosen to make U.S. arms control policy. In addition, the distribution of institutional responsibility for arms control activities should be decided by the President and directed by the White House through the National Security Council staff. Because arms control issues cut across bureaucratic and institutional lines and are a major component of national security policy, they should be directed from the White House and should reflect the President's policy goals accurately. Otherwise, the President risks losing control of national security policy to a concession-minded State Department.

To prevent repetition of excessive State Department influence on arms control policy, Bush has already designated a member of the National Security Council staff to chair all arms control interagency committees comprising State, Defense, and other department members. In addition, the President should:

- ◆ ◆ Use the National Security Council staff to enforce presidential arms control decisions as soon as they are made.

- ◆ ◆ Limit the number of career Foreign Service Officers detailed to the National Security Council because they understandably tend to represent State Department interests and viewpoints rather than those of the White House.

- ◆ ◆ Create an arms control think tank in the Pentagon to research the national security and purely military implications of U.S. arms control proposals.

- ◆ ◆ Tighten White House control of the State Department by requiring more political appointees in senior arms control policy-making positions.

- ◆ ◆ Transfer the arms control functions at the State Department's Politico-Military Bureau to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency to reduce State's influence on the technical aspects of arms control policy making.

THE ARMS CONTROL BUREAUCRACY

Arms control has become big business. Within the federal government are at least ten departments or agencies pursuing arms control activities, including the State and Defense Departments, the National Security Council (NSC), the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), and the Department of Energy (DOE).

In the Reagan Administration, the Defense and State Departments, the NSC staff, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were the principal formulators of arms control policy. Though nominally responsible for arms control, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency typically was overshadowed by these large and powerful agencies. ACDA usually provided technical support for negotiations with Moscow.

Siding with State. In recent years, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have emerged not only as an important contributor to arms control policy but as a frequent State Department ally in internal arms control policy debates. Last year, for example, the JCS sided with State against the Secretary of Defense in refusing to designate the huge Soviet radar at Krasnoyarsk in south central Siberia a “material breach” of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. The Joint Chiefs also supported State over the civilian leadership at Defense in pushing for negotiations with Moscow on permitting Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) tests in space. Through such negotiations, Moscow might have tried to slow down U.S. testing of SDI in space. The White House needs to ensure that arms control policy reflects the President’s priorities and is not merely the result of bureaucratic alliances between the various agencies that have influence over arms control.

The President’s National Security Advisor and the NSC staff, who often had led arms control policy development in prior administrations, generally had a reduced policy-making role in the Reagan Administration. Nevertheless, the NSC staff often alerted Reagan to State Department attempts to take arms control initiatives behind his back, as when State attempted to open discussions with Moscow on limiting SDI tests in space. During the final months of the Reagan Administration, however, the NSC staff shunned an active role in arms control policy making, ceding the initiative to the State Department and its top arms control adviser, Paul Nitze.

HOW ARMS CONTROL POLICY IS MADE

Since no department or agency has clear authority to formulate arms control policy, each President decides how it is to be developed. If a President does not designate an arms control “czar,” internal bureaucratic battles are likely and arms control policy making suffers.

Interagency Committees

The mechanism for formulating arms control policy is a system of interagency committees, composed of representatives from the State Department, the Pentagon, the National Security Council staff, and other government agencies interested in arms control. They are intended to coordinate the creation of arms control policy and to ensure that the views of the different agencies are presented in the process.

In the Reagan Administration, representatives of agencies were designated to chair interagency groups (IGs), which were committees made up of assistant secretaries from different departments. Examples: the IG dealing with the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) was chaired by a State Department representative; the IG for the Defense and Space Talks, which handled negotiations on strategic defense, was chaired by an Arms Control and Disarmament Agency representative. Each IG established procedures for lower-level working groups. They developed policy papers, such as a 1984 report to Congress on controlling antisatellite (ASAT) weapons through negotiations, which concluded that controlling ASAT weapons was unverifiable because of the impossibility of distinguishing between ground-based ASAT missiles intended to destroy satellites and other civilian or military space launches.

Higher and Higher Reviews. The IGs are supposed to reconcile the divergent views of the various government agencies on arms control issues and develop the U.S. position. They also are supposed to prepare options papers for review and decision at higher levels of government. In practice, however, the IG process often is unable to resolve the frequently opposing positions of the State and Defense Departments on basic arms control issues. When this happens, the unresolved issues are sent to a higher interagency committee for decision.

This higher committee is the Senior Arms Control Group (SACG), which is chaired by the National Security Adviser and includes under secretaries and assistant secretaries, or other representatives, from the Departments of State, Defense, and Energy, the National Security Council, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the CIA. The SACG discusses the work of the IGs, sometimes resolves issues, and sometimes sends them to the President for decision. Very important issues are considered by a still more senior committee, the National Security Planning Group, chaired by the President and comprising the full National Security Council.¹ This body is the supreme forum for deciding national security issues; the President is the final arbiter.

¹ In addition to the President, the NSC includes the Vice President and the Secretaries of State and Defense. The Director of Central Intelligence and the Director of ACDA are statutory "advisers," while the National Security Adviser and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff attend NSC meetings, as do others whom the President invites.

In the final Reagan years, because of summits with Moscow and frequent ministerial meetings with U.S. allies, another committee, the Arms Control Support Group, was created. Chaired by Air Force Colonel Robert Linhard of the NSC staff, it was to chart the U.S. negotiating position at summits and ministerial meetings. This group became the principal vehicle for structuring presidential decision making on arms control, which relegated the IGs to backing up the Arms Control Support Group with technical analysis and support.

Extraordinary Negotiating Groups

The increased intensity of arms control negotiations in the three final years of the Reagan Administration led to the creation of some extraordinary negotiating groups – extraordinary in that they stood outside the normal interagency process and were intended to deal with special problems, such as the formulation of policy during U.S.-Soviet summits. Perhaps most well known of these was the “experts’ group.” It generally consisted of the principal negotiators who represented the U.S. in arms control talks in Geneva, the President’s two special advisors for arms control, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency director, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy, representatives from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA, the director of the NSC arms control staff, and the President’s science advisor. Chaired by Paul Nitze, the Secretary of State’s senior arms control advisor, this group met with its Soviet counterparts, often in intense, marathon sessions at such major U.S.-Soviet meetings as the 1986 Reykjavik summit and the frequent meetings of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Secretary of State George Shultz.

The Role of ACDA

The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency was created by Congress in 1961 to take the primary responsibility for developing and carrying out U.S. arms control policy. By law, the ACDA director is the principal arms control advisor to the President and Secretary of State.

The reality, however, is quite different. Although ACDA’s technical expertise is formidable, the agency has taken a back seat to the State Department in developing arms control policy. State has at its disposal a huge staff and important foreign contacts, which can be mobilized to support or oppose an arms control policy or initiative. State also has the prestige of the Secretary of State to fight for its policy views against those of an often obscure ACDA director. Finally, ACDA, with a permanent staff of less than 200, is housed in the State Department building surrounded by State Department offices. It is often outgunned by the Department’s bureaus of European Affairs and Politico-Military Affairs, as well as the Office of the Secretary of State, all of which have arms control expertise equal to if not greater than that of ACDA. Most ACDA directors have allied themselves with the Secretary of State or the President’s National Security Advisor in policy disputes to survive the bureaucratic battles that swirl constantly around U.S. arms control policy.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT ROLE IN SETTING ARMS CONTROL POLICY

The State Department has at least four offices working directly on arms control matters – the Under Secretary for Policy, the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and the Bureau of European Affairs. There were two special advisers for arms control to Reagan and his Secretary of State – former Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) negotiator Edward Rowny and former Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) negotiator Paul Nitze. In addition, Nitze held the high-level title of ambassador-at-large for arms control and occupied an office near the Secretary of State. Nitze's proximity to power reflected his influence.

The Politico-Military Affairs Bureau

The State Department's Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs (PM) is responsible for policy on issues that touch U.S. security and diplomatic relations with foreign countries. It has significant input into the arms control policy process. A representative of PM chairs the interagency groups for the START and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force negotiations that led to the 1987 INF Treaty. Other interagency groups handle State's supervision of proposed high-technology sales to other nations, particularly the Soviet bloc, and U.S. government arms supplies to other states, chiefly Third World allies. Most important is the bureau's Office of Strategic Nuclear Policy, which orchestrates the State Department's arms control efforts. PM supplies the State Department representatives to the Geneva Nuclear and Space Talks. The principal U.S. negotiators, however, report directly to the Secretary of State. In recent years, the Politico-Military Bureau's power has grown, thanks largely to the aggressive direction of its former bureau chief, arms control expert Richard Burt (1981-1983), who until recently was the U.S. Ambassador to West Germany.

Clearinghouse for Ideas. The Politico-Military Bureau also is responsible for ensuring that interested agencies and offices of the government are invited to meetings and apprised of information, developments, and initiatives concerning arms control policy. In this capacity the Politico-Military Bureau serves not only as a central organizer of arms control policy meetings but as a clearinghouse within the State Department for the exchange of arms control ideas for the entire government.

The Politico-Military Bureau is staffed primarily by Foreign Service Officers (FSOs), some military officers on loan from the Pentagon, and a few civil service employees with technical backgrounds. The senior officials of the bureau generally are career FSOs or military officers on special assignment who appear to be chosen with little regard for prior experience in the complexities of arms control.

The European Affairs Bureau

The Bureau of European Affairs (EUR), which is responsible for U.S. foreign policy toward the Soviet Union and Eastern and Western Europe, plays a major role in arms control policy. Since U.S. arms control discussions and negotiations are primarily with the Soviet Union and its East European allies, EUR is heavily engaged in arms control matters. Under skilled and determined leadership, like that of Lawrence S. Eagleburger (1981-1983) and Richard Burt (1983-1985), the Bureau can play a leading role in State's effort to dominate U.S. arms control policy.

EUR suffers from a certain schizophrenia, however, because it must also consider the interests of U.S. allies in arms control talks between the U.S. and USSR. The European Bureau often takes the side of allies who fear that the U.S. is too tough with the Soviets. This happened, for example, in debates within the Reagan Administration about ending compliance with the 1979 SALT II Treaty.

Contradicting the White House. Within the EUR, the Office of Soviet Union Affairs exercises considerable influence on making and promoting arms control policy. Virtually no statement can be made anywhere in the U.S. government on U.S.-Soviet arms control matters without the sanction of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs. State Department officials from this office have even contradicted White House officials when they used language not approved by State. Example: the State Department last December continued to say that the START and space and defense talks, conducted by the Reagan Administration, would resume on February 15, 1989, in Geneva, even though the Reagan White House and the Bush transition team both had said that the talks would not resume until the incoming administration had time to review strategic issues.

The diffusion of responsibility within the U.S. government for arms control and the large arms control staff at State give the Department enormous influence on the process. This is partly because each of the interested bureaus at State demands to be represented on the interagency groups and other intergovernmental working groups that make or influence arms control policy. It is not uncommon for half of the voting members on these interagency committees to be from State.

HOW THE STATE DEPARTMENT UNDERMINED REAGAN POLICY

State often has sought the support of U.S. allies in opposing presidential arms control views or decisions. Whenever Reagan, for example, considered ending U.S. compliance with the unratified 1979 SALT II agreement on long-range nuclear weapons in response to clear Soviet violations, the State Department, with the support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, helped to stir up protests from Congress, the media, and the NATO allies. By claiming that ending compliance with SALT II would harm NATO, State argued that continued compliance was necessary for the sake of Western unity against the Soviet threat. The opposition by America's allies carried great weight with

Reagan. But the President should try to detect when the State Department is putting forth its own views as those of U.S. allies.

State sometimes seeks support for its positions in arms control policy from civilian U.S. scientists who maintain close contact not only with State but with U.S. allies and the Soviet Union. Scientists working for the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) meet frequently with Soviet scientists and arms control experts. State Department arms control officials use NAS scientists as a back channel to Soviet arms control officials. Very useful in this regard are the semi-annual meetings on arms control issues of scientists from the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Soviet Academy of Sciences.² In talks on such issues as "Verifying Limits on Sea-launched Cruise Missiles" or "Measures to Control the Production of Fissionable Materials," as occurred at meetings in Moscow and Washington in 1987, U.S. government scientists have discussed with the Soviets issues or ideas of which the President already had disapproved. An example was a proposal to limit the testing of SDI weapons and sensors in space, which Reagan explicitly rejected, but which U.S. government scientists "unofficially" discussed with the Soviets.

Opposition "Trial Balloons." These backdoor swaps of arms control ideas between U.S. and Soviet officials most likely led to a U.S. arms control proposal not to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty for ten years if the Soviets reduced their offensive nuclear forces by 50 percent. The idea for this proposal very likely came first from unofficial U.S. arms control experts and scientists who mentioned it as a "trial balloon" in unofficial meetings with the Soviets. The idea was then raised with the official U.S. delegation by the Soviets in the Defense and Space Talks in Geneva. This approach tended to undermine Reagan's policy, since the White House did not control these nongovernment scientists, most of whom were outspoken opponents of the Administration's arms control policy. If the White House wishes to control policy, it needs to be aware that such unofficial initiatives provide State with yet another method of increasing its influence in the process.

State also can use its direct diplomatic access to Soviet officials to promote State's own arms control policy preferences. An example was the State Department's effort to weaken the U.S. position on limiting the throw-weight (the payload capacity of a ballistic missile) of Soviet missiles during the early days in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) in Geneva. The President had approved a U.S. negotiating position requiring a 50 percent cut in Soviet throw-weight. Yet, during the first rounds of the START negotiations in 1983, State worked constantly to dilute the U.S. proposal to meet Soviet objections.

² Another group of arms control advocates that also meets regularly with the Soviets is the "Dartmouth group" and includes many of the same scientists as the National Academy of Sciences committee.

REFORMING HOW ARMS CONTROL POLICY IS MADE

It is not enough for the President to state his arms control policy. His appointees must have the institutional means to enforce that policy. To do this, the Bush Administration should:

1) Make the National Security Council a more powerful architect of arms control policy.

Too often, State Department representatives circumvent the President's policies on arms control through winks and nods to the Soviets, backdoor dealings with other governments, or the Secretary of State's private meetings with the Soviet Foreign Minister. State uses America's allies to apply pressure on the President and Congress to dilute U.S. positions. An expert, independent NSC staff, including fewer career officials and more political appointees, along with a comparable staff in the office of the Secretary of Defense, can help check the State Department's institutional tendencies toward accommodation and compromise. They could do this by ensuring that the impact of State Department arms control initiatives is reviewed thoroughly by the Pentagon and the NSC arms control staff.

2) Designate National Security Council members as chairmen of interagency groups.

Bush already has appointed a member of the NSC staff to chair all meetings of interagency groups dealing with arms control. Appointing an NSC staff member as chairman, rather than a member of State or another agency, reduces the likelihood that his own loyalties will lead the chairman to promote his agency's preferences through the interagency process. Representation of the various agencies on the interagency groups, meanwhile, should be limited strictly by the NSC so that there is only one State Department staffer per committee. This would reduce State's overrepresentation in these groups, and thus its disproportionate influence on arms control policy making.

3) Limit the number of detailees to the NSC staff.

The National Security Council would benefit from a reduction in the number of personnel detailed to its staff from other government agencies. Too many NSC staff members are drawn from the foreign service and the military. Understandably, most bring with them the institutional agenda of the agency in which they have made their careers and to which most plan to return. All senior NSC staff should be political appointees with no ties to the career bureaucracy, whether military, foreign service, or civil service. Assignments from the agencies or the military should be limited to junior officials and support staff. The NSC staff was created specifically to serve the President and should be composed of those who share his views. The departments and agencies of government have large staffs of career experts; the White House and National Security Council staffs should not.

4) Create an arms control think tank in the Defense Department.

U.S. arms control policy would be vastly improved if the Pentagon created a permanent policy office, responsible for determining how arms control could improve U.S. security. This office would offset the State Department's considerable arms control establishment, which too often seems to seek compromise and concession for the sake of forging agreements.

The Pentagon's new arms control policy office should receive intelligence material on the Soviet Union and other participants in arms negotiations directly from the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency. The Joint Chiefs of Staff would provide it with information on U.S. military plans and programs and keep it abreast of developments in the Soviet armed forces. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy would supply a civilian assessment of this information, as well as evaluations of allied defense concerns and the possible impact of U.S. proposals on the NATO alliance and other U.S. allies. The policy office itself would use this material to evaluate the national security implications of U.S. arms control proposals.

5) Transfer part of State's Politico-Military Bureau to ACDA.

The arms control functions of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs should be transferred from the State Department to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. This would help free the State Department to concentrate on other areas of military policy that have consequences for diplomacy. Transferring parts of the Politico-Military Bureau to ACDA would eliminate redundant positions and reduce overhead costs. The non-arms control functions of State's Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, such as those dealing with security assistance and military policy in different regions of the world, could be transferred to the Office of the Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science, and Technology or left in a modified Politico-Military Bureau.

In addition to transferring most of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs to ACDA, the senior-level arms control positions in the State Department that were filled in the Reagan Administration by Paul Nitze and James Timbie (the arms control assistant to the Deputy Secretary of State) should be abolished. Their successors, if needed, should be assigned to ACDA, as was senior arms control adviser, Ambassador Edward Rowny. Finally, all U.S. arms control delegations should be managed and supported by ACDA, which is one of the principal purposes for which that agency was created.

CONCLUSION

Arms control policy is crucial to U.S. security. Arms control, however, is only one element in U.S. global political and military strategy – it is not an end in itself. The degree to which U.S. arms are limited or reduced by treaties can affect the capability of the U.S. not only to defend itself and its allies, but to deter war and to carry out its political goals.

Disproportionate Influence. An issue as important as this should be reviewed thoroughly by all interested agencies of the U.S. government. In reality, however, the State Department has more influence on arms control policy than the Pentagon, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, or even the National Security Council staff. This influence derives from the interest in arms control matters by a succession of Secretaries of State and from the formidable arms control bureaucracy that has become entrenched at State over the past two decades.

Such a degree of State Department influence on the formulation of U.S. arms control policy is not in the U.S. interest. The State Department softens U.S. arms control positions for the sake of improving relations with the Soviet Union. State Department officials therefore tend to play down Soviet violations of existing arms control treaties for fear of provoking Moscow. And they use their extensive contacts with private arms control experts, scientists, and representatives of U.S. allies to promote arms control positions that have already been expressly opposed by the President under whom they serve.

Returning to Diplomacy. By its nature, arms control policy always will be formed by a number of different agencies and departments in the U.S. government. The State Department will continue to have a role in the discussion and implementation of U.S. arms control negotiations with the Soviets. This role, however, should be defined by the President and his advisors, not by the State Department bureaucracy. By making the National Security Council the central arena of arms control decision making, limiting the State Department's domination of important interagency committees, creating a new Pentagon arms control think tank, and strengthening the independence and influence of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the Bush Administration can serve U.S. security interests and help to return the State Department to its properly limited diplomatic role in U.S.-Soviet arms control negotiations.

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