

Weinberger challenges the arms controllers

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger has in his recent speeches and public comments consistently put forth a strategic doctrine in which offense and defense are equally emphasized. His most recent statement of this approach was his testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on Oct. 31, significant portions of which we excerpt below.

Until 1960, the concept of combined offense and defense was firmly embedded in our strategic outlook. Then, from 1960, the influence of the Pugwash Conference for East-West crisis management led to the abandonment of strategic defense. From that date forward, deterrence was no longer merely an aspect of our strategy, but rather its cornerstone, and defense was replaced by vulnerability; that is the content of the infamous strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

From that time dates the emergence of a new pressure group, the arms-control lobby, although the secretary does not so name it. Perhaps the most powerful interest group in the world, the lobby is unalterably opposed to any strategic defense. Its pressure—and lies—led to the signing and ratification of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972.

Weinberger said on Oct. 22, "Recent history shows that arms control has hardly been a raving success. . . . It is difficult to argue that the only moral course for this nation is more of the same." Weinberger, however, does not oppose arms control outright, since his strategic doctrine incorporates all the legitimate goals of arms control, while abandoning MAD.

The arms-control lobby, however, bitterly opposes Weinberger and his influence on President Reagan, precisely because it is committed to preserving the vulnerability of U.S. and allied forces! The latest example of this are remarks by Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wisc.), known as the Hair-Transplant King: "Weinberger should support arms control or quit. . . . Secretary Weinberger has questioned arms control and believe me, we are in big trouble."

. . . Some people allege that the President's Strategic Defense Initiative is upsetting a stable order which has lasted for 40 years. In fact, the strategic order has been far from

stable. . . But in speaking of "deterrence" . . . we may have created a misimpression that it is some sort of unchanging stable arrangement. . . .

While the basic role of strategic offensive forces—to impose unacceptable costs in response to aggression—has been relatively constant, this has not been true of the role of strategic *defensive* forces.

As the Soviet threat to the United States developed in the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration reacted by strengthening our nation's strategic defenses. The North American air defense program was expanded: By the early 1960s, the U.S. had 2,000 aircraft dedicated to this role and 3,000 surface-to-air missiles. In 1960, the Defense Department spent about as much for strategic defense as for strategic offensive forces. In addition, the Eisenhower administration emphasized civil-defense preparations. It is worth noting that this emphasis on strategic air defense did influence Soviet planning: The Soviet leadership was dissuaded from building a new strategic bomber and concentrated instead on ballistic missiles. The Soviet Union built a new intercontinental bomber only *after* we had abandoned air defenses. Thus, it appears the absence of strategic defense stimulated this Soviet build-up.

However, our policy on defensive forces soon changed. We concluded in the early 1960s that for technical reasons the ABM network then under consideration could not defend the United States adequately against the projected Soviet missile threat. Hence, we cut back our proposed ABM system, and sought to place arms-control limits on such systems. We also slashed our air defenses since the unobstructed missile threat made them too vulnerable. After we had ratified the 1972 ABM Treaty, we soon began to neglect what was left of North American air defense and abandoned the single, permitted site for ballistic missile defense.

The negotiation of the ABM Treaty led to the belief in the United States that we had reached an understanding with the Soviet Union to keep our nations vulnerable to each other's nuclear attack. Moreover, we thought the Soviet Union would join us in maintaining this mutual vulnerability as a stable order—a strategic order that would render a further build-up in offensive forces unnecessary. In fact, the belief was widely held in the West that this agreed vulnerability was the best, indeed the only, way to slow down the Soviet build-up in offensive nuclear arms. The 1972 treaty curbing ballistic missile defense—the ABM Treaty—was intended to preserve this consensus in perpetuity.

As it turned out, the consensus was illusory. Our theory about a U.S.-Soviet consensus on a stable, mutual vulnerability had nothing to do with the way the Soviets viewed nuclear weapons. Despite lip service to the contrary, the Soviet government went right ahead building up and expanding its missile forces, perfecting its air defenses, and working vigorously on ballistic missile defense. It also expanded a great effort to prepare underground shelters for the political

and military leadership. Since the signing of the ABM Treaty, the Soviet Union has spent as much on strategic defense as it has spent on strategic offensive forces. . . .

When this administration came into office, we were confronted by a serious deterioration in U.S. strategic nuclear capabilities.

- The Soviets had built a force of SS-18 and SS-19 ICBMs with sufficient numbers of highly accurate warheads to pose a major threat against our ICBM force.

- Soviet hardening programs had, in the absence of U.S. improvements to our forces, created virtual sanctuaries for their ICBMs, launch-control facilities, and many leadership shelters.

- Soviet air defenses were becoming sufficiently sophisticated so that the ability of our old B-52s to penetrate them would be severely jeopardized in the near-term.

- Most serious of all, our strategic command, control, and communications net had become highly vulnerable to Soviet nuclear attack.

Our response had to be vigorous. Building on the valuable elements in some existing programs, President Reagan fashioned a strategic modernization program to repair our deterrent. . . .

But our strategic modernization program, started in 1981, is not a sufficient response for the long-term. We should not remain locked into an approach that will demand an indefinite competition in offensive arms. As the President stated in his address a week ago to the United Nations General Assembly, “. . . if we are destined by history to compete, militarily, to keep the peace, then let us compete in systems that defend our society rather than competing in weapons which can destroy us both, and much of God’s creation along with us.”

The prospect of an unending requirement for the Western democracies to compete with a totalitarian regime by constantly adding to and perfecting these awesome weapons of mass destruction is an unappealing vision of the future. Would our democracies support such a competition indefinitely?

The President concluded that we needed to begin a high priority effort to develop advanced anti-ballistic missile systems—not only as a hedge against similar Soviet efforts—but more importantly as a means to build a safer strategic order for the future. . . .

Now let me turn to the question of transition to strategic defense from the current situation with our exclusive reliance on nuclear offensive forces. By openly discussing our program on strategic defense, we in the United States took a course different from that of the Soviet Union. We do not conceal the fact that we are engaged in research on missile defense. We do not violate treaties. We brief all our allies and consult extensively with them. In fact, I have just returned from such consultations in Brussels.

standing offer in Geneva to discuss with the Soviets how we could cooperate to establish a more secure strategic order in the long term, through an agreed, safe transition toward a

decreasing reliance on offensive nuclear arms.

As we seek to achieve a strategic order based on defense, we must not neglect our offensive deterrent systems. . . .

Far from being destabilizing, it turns out that the initial defensive capabilities, if properly planned and phased, can actually strengthen the present deterrent capability of our alliance. Even partially effective defenses can help deny Soviet planners the objective of a missile attack and hence serve to strengthen deterrence.

The Geneva talks

. . . This is what we seek to negotiate in Geneva. The transition would be more difficult and more prolonged if the Soviet Union persists in expanding its missile arsenals and rejected the road of cooperation to a safer world.

What can be said about the Soviet motivation to choose either road? Those critical of strategic defense argue that a cooperative transition would never be accepted by the Soviet rulers. These critics are convinced that the Soviet rulers would

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rather forgo a chance to protect their own country than give up their capability to threaten our alliance with mass destruction. Yet, according to these critics, these same Soviet rulers would readily settle for “a plague on both your houses”—that is, they would settle down with us in an equilibrium of mutual vulnerability and indefinitely keep it stable. Haven’t we learned during the last 15 years that by abstaining from missile defense ourselves we do not halt the Soviet build-up in offensive missiles nor do we halt their defensive efforts?

Isn’t the opposite more plausible? If the time come when Soviet rulers are willing to abide by an understanding on strategic arms control, it seems unlikely that this would be to preserve indefinitely the threat of mutual mass destruction—or, as seen from Moscow, to preserve the threat of the destruction of the Soviet Union. A genuine understanding on strategic arms control must give promise to both the Soviet Union and to our alliance that it will serve to reduce, and eventually eliminate this horrible threat.