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from time to time calls attention to published material that might contribute toward clarification or understanding of issues affecting world peace. The accompanying reprints constitute Reprint Mailing No. 97

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(The following is taken from an essay by Randolph Bourne, turn-of-the-century essayist. Quoted from MANAS, June 29, 1988, p. 1. P.O. Box 32112, El Sereno Station, L.A., CA. 90032)

"Country is a concept of peace, of tolerance, of living and let live. But State is essentially a concept of power, of competition; it signifies a group in its aggressive aspects. And we have the misfortune of being born not only into a country but into a State, and as we grow up we learn to mingle the two feelings into a hopeless confusion.

"The State is the country acting as a political unit. It is the group acting as a repository of force, a determiner of law, arbiter of justice. International politics is a 'power politics' because it is a relation of States and that is what States infallibly and calamitously are, huge aggregations of human and industrial force that may be hurled against each other in war. When a country acts as a whole in relation to another country, or in imposing laws on its own inhabitants, or in coercing or punishing individuals or minorities, it is acting as a State..."

(The following is quoted from an ad printed in THE NEW YORK TIMES August 23, 1982, by Friends of the Earth, 1045 Sansome St., S.F., CA. 94111)

"The political adage says, 'The public is always ahead of the politicians.' And so it is now. Millions of people are demonstrating for an end to the arms race, an end to belligerence, and a turn toward something 'higher' in human affairs. The leaders of most governments have not understood this call. Perhaps they are not equipped to grasp it. ...

"We need a profound change. A new political language which recognizes that real security emerges only when nations befriend each other. Belligerency, competition for resources on a finite planet, exploitation of people and nature are behaviors that have failed. They're out of date. We need to seek people skilled in the arts of peace, accommodation, compromise. Not shy to speak of love for all creatures and for whom war is a violation of natural law, a breakdown of the civilized experiment. We need to articulate a system of values that reflect this."

Feeling good about hard-target-kill capability

Policy makers put forth elaborate military and political rationales for building nuclear weapons. But close examination of one key policy reveals conflicts in the arguments—and a strong, underlying psychological component.

by Steven Kull

ARE NEW U.S. NUCLEAR weapons being built for objective security reasons, or are they really intended to serve domestic psychological needs? Do these weapons have some military purpose not already satisfied by existing capabilities, or does the impetus to build them arise from an outdated reflex which ignores key changes engendered by nuclear weapons? Do policy makers genuinely believe the strategic arguments they make in support of new weapon systems, or are they playing a game of perceptions?

These are questions I set out to explore in an interview study of 84 members of the defense policy-making community, including active and former officials in the departments of Defense and State, the National Security Council, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Congress, and the Rand Corporation and other think tanks.

One of the key areas I examined was the rationale for deploying weapons with the capability to destroy hardened targets such as missile silos, command-and-control centers, and leadership bunkers. Nearly all of the major nuclear weapons developed by the United States in recent years—including the MX, cruise missiles, the Pershing II, and the Trident II (D-5)—have this "hard-target kill" capability.

Overall, the respondents' rationales had a kind of layered structure. In the first layer some ascribed a military need to the weapons. However, when reminded of problems with these arguments they abandoned them with surprising ease. Others rejected the military need right from the beginning.

The second layer of argument, and the most dominant, held that deploying hard-target-capable weapons was important for manipulating Soviet and European perceptions. These rationales also had certain problems, which led respondents to make statements that seemed inconsistent and even confused.

Finally, at the deepest layer, respondents abandoned positions based on security interests and, instead, rationalized deployments based on a concern for certain psychological needs of the American people.

WHEN ARGUING THE NEED for hard-target-capable weapons in terms of objective military considerations, the respondents tended to ignore significant changes in military reality caused by large arsenals of nuclear weapons. For example, some talked about trying to limit damage to the United States by knocking out Soviet missiles before they are launched, or by disrupting Soviet command-and-control facilities. I would then ask, given that a substantial portion of Soviet strategic weapons are invulnerable, whether the United States, even in a first strike, could destroy enough Soviet weapons to reduce significantly the damage the Soviets could inflict in retaliation.

I further questioned whether U.S. hard-target-capable weapons would even be able to fulfill their mission. The Soviets have the capability to determine which missile silo would be destroyed by an incoming warhead, with enough time to launch their missile out from under the incoming warhead. Command-and-control centers would also have enough time to launch the weapons under their control before being destroyed.

With unexpected regularity, when I raised these problems respondents did not contest them. Instead, in most cases, they simply moved to a different argument.

Another argument was that weapons capable of hard-target kill create limited military options, so that in the event

Illustrations: J.P. Rini, United States

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of a nuclear war there would be a greater probability that the conflict would remain limited to strikes against military targets. I then raised some of the problems with this argument: that strikes against military targets would often also destroy population centers; and that striking at missile silos would encourage the Soviets to use their missiles rather than lose them, thus encouraging escalation. Here again I was surprised at how easily respondents relinquished this argument.

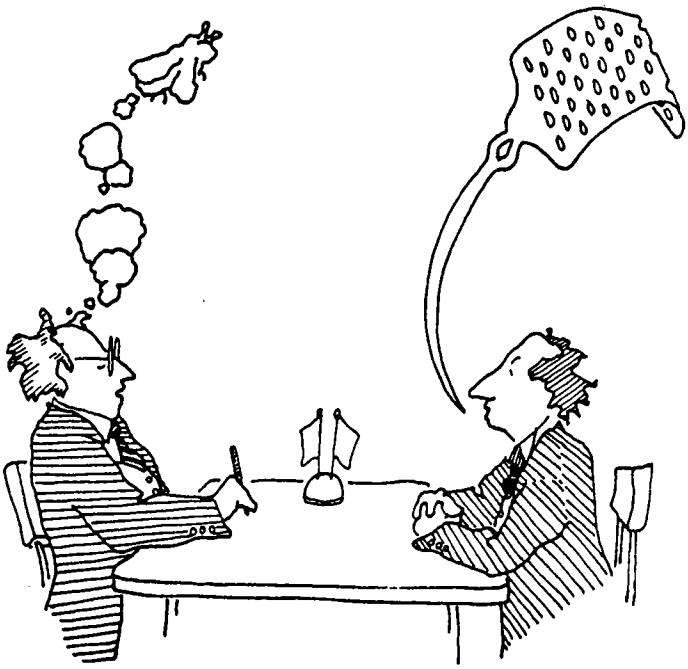
A very few expressed the vague hope that perhaps a nuclear war could stay limited, but most said that this proposition was in fact hopeless. A statement by a State Department official was typical: "I don't believe in limited nuclear war. It's up there with limited pregnancy." One of the very few attempts to support the idea came from a Pentagon official who said, in a defensive manner: "I think there is a nugget there that is not obviously ridiculous."

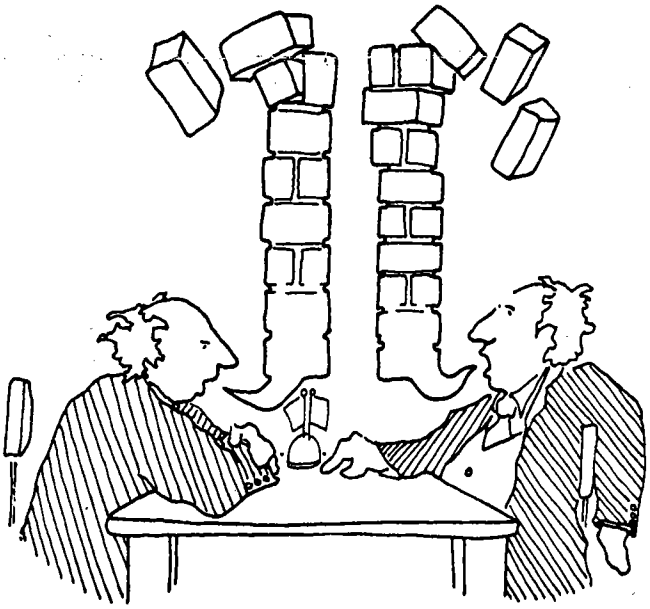
The most common response was simply to reject the military need for hard-target-capable weapons. For example, not long after the deployment of Pershing IIs and GLCMs (ground-launched cruise missiles), I asked a high-level member of the Reagan administration about the missiles' "military purpose." He answered: "Well, that's sort of a phony issue. . . . I think it's fairly well known that if we did not have the Pershings and the GLCMs we would target those targets some other way."

AFTER ABANDONING arguments based on objective military concerns, in most cases respondents would shift to an entirely different type of rationale. They spoke, instead, about the need to manipulate Soviet perceptions.

One key perceptual argument was that building weapons apparently designed for a counterforce war—that is, a war against military targets rather than population centers—enhances the belief that a nuclear war could indeed be limited to a counterforce exchange. There was some concern that, if there is a general belief that any nuclear war will certainly escalate to countervalue exchanges (destruction of cities), then the United States may be perceived as overly fearful of using nuclear weapons, especially in response to a conventional invasion of Europe. A former member of the National Security Council explained: "If we have countersilo capability it seems to me [the Soviets] can plausibly come to the conclusion we'd use it if the circumstances were right. Now they might be able to launch out from under it . . . but at least it would 'make sense' for us to attack."

A second major argument for hard-target-kill capability was that it strengthens the Soviet perception that a nuclear exchange will inevitably escalate to all-out war. And this perception is beneficial to the United States, in that it enhances deterrence by weakening possible Soviet beliefs about achieving any advantage from a nuclear war.





In one such view, the Soviets might believe they could attack the West at a level of escalation at which their capabilities would give them an advantage, such as an exchange that involved only land-based ICBMs. Their hope would then be that the United States would not escalate for fear of counterescalation. This is called "escalation dominance." To prevent such a belief from taking hold, it was thus said the United States must match the Soviets at every rung of the escalation ladder. As a former Rand analyst put it: "We're going to create a world with . . . each step of the escalatory ladder [such] that there is only one choice for the Soviet Union, and that's massive total attack or none."

It was also argued that, besides matching the Soviets step for step, hard-target-kill capability increases the certainty of escalation in the Soviet mind by putting the Kremlin in a use-them-or-lose-them position. In this context, the fact that either side would have the option of launching out from under incoming warheads was not seen as a problem; rath-

er, it strengthens the perception that any conflict will necessarily escalate.

A final argument was that hard-target-kill capability was necessary for full escalation. The Soviet leaders were depicted as willing to accept massive losses to their population in the pursuit of political goals. Threatening the population, then, would not constitute an ultimate deterrent. For full deterrence, the ability to destroy Soviet weapons, command-and-control centers, and leadership bunkers was seen as essential.

OBVIOUSLY, THERE IS tension between these rationales for hard-target-kill capability. On the one hand, there is a desire to create the perception that U.S. leaders would be willing to use nuclear weapons because the flexibility granted by hard-target-kill weapons increases the possibility that a nuclear war can be kept limited. On the other hand, deploying these weapons is seen as a way of strengthening deterrence by strengthening the perception that a nuclear war will necessarily escalate to the highest levels.

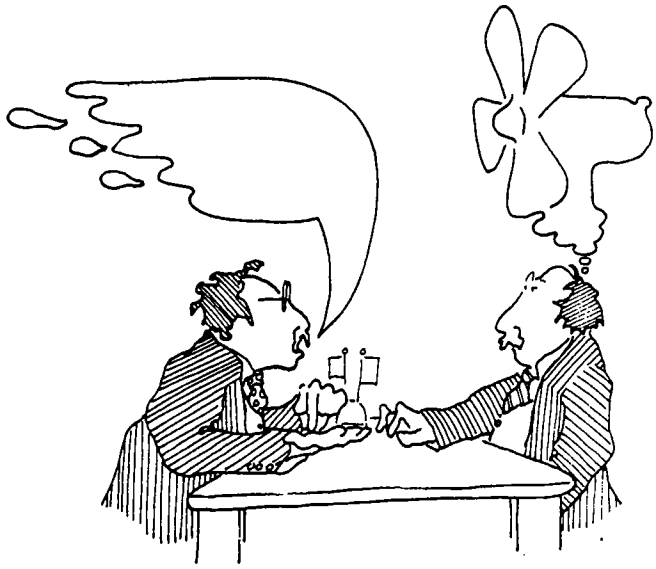
These rationales conflict because the Soviet perception of the probability that a nuclear war can remain limited, if the perception changes at all, will either increase or decrease in response to U.S. deployments. Each incremental increase in the Soviet perception of the probability of limitation will, theoretically, increase the credibility of U.S. threats to use nuclear weapons; but it will also decrease the Soviets' fear of nuclear war. Each incremental increase in the Soviet perception that a nuclear war will be annihilating will increase Soviet fears of nuclear war, but it will decrease the credibility of U.S. threats to use nuclear weapons.

Making matters even more complex, respondents also indicated a desire to influence the perceptions of European allies through building hard-target-capable weapons. The Pershing IIs and GLCMs were seen as important because they provide the capability to strike at the Soviet homeland, thereby insuring that any European conflict would escalate to the intercontinental level. In the words of a former Pentagon official: "The primary purpose of the INF [intermediate-range nuclear force] weapons is to insure in [the Europeans'] mind that the [strategic] U.S. nuclear forces would be used if they were attacked." The Europeans could then feel confident that they would not be abandoned in the event of a limited Soviet attack and, more importantly, they could feel greater certainty that both superpowers would be deterred from making risky moves on the assumption that a war could stay limted to Europe. Thus there is tension between the desire to convince the Soviets that the United States believes a European nuclear war would not necessarily escalate, and the wish to assure the Europeans that the United States does not plan to use Europe as a battlefield.

One could argue that it is not necessary to resolve all these tensions and conflicts because both arguments point to the same conclusion—the desirability of deploying the hard-target-capable weapons. But it is not so simple. If one accepts the objectives of one argument, the other becomes a reason *not* to deploy. The net effect is that the arguments cancel each other out. The only logical solution is to choose one rationale and reject the other.

But this was not generally done. Most respondents used *both* rationales in support of deployment, and virtually no one rejected either rationale. The disparate views were even set forth with enthusiasm, as if the cumulative effect should strengthen the argument. There was a marked resistance to seeing any tension at all between the objectives of the two rationales. Several respondents simply asserted: "We're trying to do both."

MOST RESPONDENTS DID not limit themselves to one rationale for hard-target-kill capability. Because of the various ways these arguments conflict, many respondents at times appeared somewhat confused and inconsistent. They would tend to shift between rationales with little apparent awareness of the differences between them. When I



tried to point out these inconsistencies they usually moved to another subject or shifted to a more simplistic argument —for example, that hard-target-capable weapons are necessary for U.S. assured destruction capability.

When a former middle-level Pentagon official who had worked on Presidential Directive-59 (a limited-war policy developed during the Carter administration) was asked if U.S. policy makers want the Soviets to think a nuclear war could be controlled, his initial answer was negative: "We want the Soviets to think that a nuclear war will be an unmitigated disaster . . . because that helps deterrence." I then referred to indications that the Soviets might be moving in the direction of thinking in terms of limited nuclear wars—indications to which he seemed to give some credence—and asked: "Is the movement in that direction a positive movement from our point of view?" Despite his previously expressed wish for the Soviets to think a nuclear war would be an "unmitigated disaster" he answered: "I think so."

A high-level arms control negotiator also saw indications that the Soviets are beginning to think in terms of limited nuclear war as positive, although he warned that "it could

be a propaganda ploy." Later in the interview, however, he seemed concerned that the Soviets might think they could gain some control over the escalation process, and this might make them feel freer to take risks. Therefore, an objective of U.S. policy, he argued, is to make an impression on the Soviets that would enhance their perception that a war would probably escalate: "We want them to think that . . . they stand to lose so much more by starting something which they don't know how to control and [that] it might get out of control."

With one respondent, who had held a high-level position doing war planning at NATO headquarters, I pursued these questions at length. From the beginning he held that the purpose of hard-target-capable weapons in Europe was "primarily perceptual—to send signals." The first signal he emphasized was the potential for escalation to strategic weapons: "There must be the perception of using weapons in a way that signals further use—strategic use." Then, without apparent awareness of any inconsistency, he explained: "In a general sense, there's always an interest in showing restraint . . . such that the Soviet leadership doesn't feel that its only recourse is for massive use of nuclear weapons."

However, when I asked him what the INF weapons would be targeted at he said that they would destroy "primary military weapons" in the Soviet Union. I then asked: "So it's an escalatory response?" With a laugh he replied: "I think most people would cite that as an escalatory response. . . . You are attacking the homeland directly. That suggests very strongly what the next step in escalation will be, and that is a coupling to the West's strategic weapons."

When I tried to point out that "there's some tension between that and the goal of keeping a war limited to Europe," he reasserted his interest in keeping a war limited, saying: "I think the more desirable objective is to bring about a cessation of the war . . . at the lowest level of conflict." After going around in circles for a while I formulated the problem with some emphasis, saying: "But given that before the conflict you're trying to communicate to the Soviets what your intentions would be in the circumstance, because you'll have the capability to destroy the missile silos and the capability to destroy significant command-and-control centers, then the Soviets are going to tend to interpret your whole force posture as being an escalatory force posture."

At this point, he finally seemed to grasp the problem. There was a very long pause as he stared at me. Then he said, with apparent discomfort: "I understand the point." He made some mild efforts to resurrect his previous arguments, but by the end of the interview he seemed to confirm implicitly that he had not seen the incompatibility of his positions. I asked him if, in all his years at NATO headquarters, anybody had ever pointed out this problem to him, or if he had ever heard anybody else discussing it. He answered in the negative.

IN A FEW CASES, respondents recognized the conflict between objectives and had a way of reconciling them. This generally involved trying to create a double image in the minds of the Soviets. On the one hand there is the suggestion that Americans believe a nuclear war can be controlled, so that war continues to be a viable instrument of policy. Building hard-target-capable weapons, declaratory policy, and publicly discussed plans for fighting a limited war support this view. On the other hand, there is an effort to instill among the Soviets the idea that, in fact, a nuclear war would go out of control. Building hard-target-capable weapons according to war plans that call for strikes at silos and command-and-control centers supports this idea. In short, the Soviets are intended to perceive that Americans are emboldened by the belief that a nuclear war *can* be controlled,

while at the same time they are expected to perceive that, in fact, a nuclear war *cannot* be controlled.

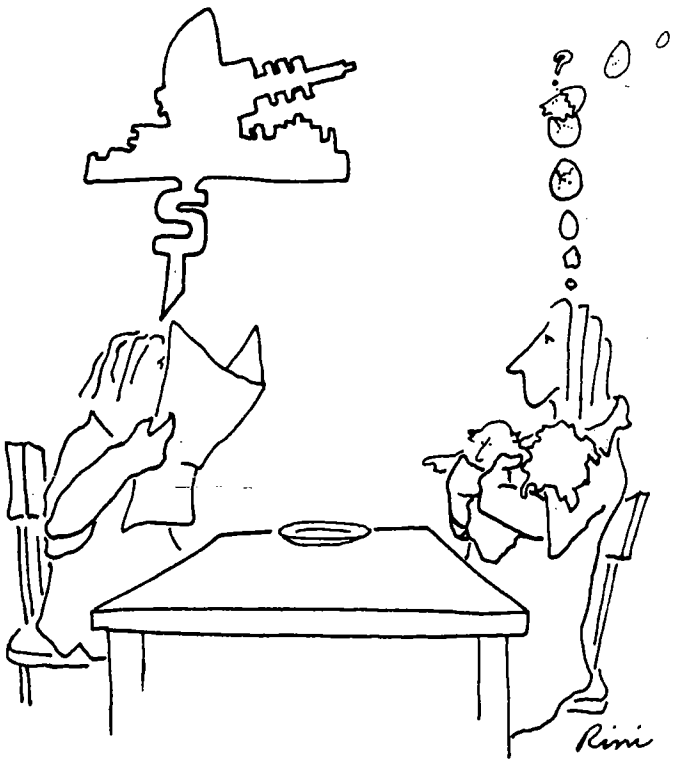
A former high-level Pentagon official, who had been involved in developing the escalation-control-oriented PD-59, explained that if the Soviets "think it's all going to go out of control, they won't start the process. And that's the conclusion we'd want them to come to. . . . If they reach that conclusion, the game is over and we've won—that is, we have deterred Soviet actions. . . . The difficulty is that going out of control, from their point of view, means we're going out of control from our point of view, and launching the whole SIOP [a full-scale nuclear attack] at the Russians is a wonderful deterrent if the Russians believe it will be launched. . . . The trouble with that is, as a general deterrent it lacks credibility. . . . [Therefore] we increase the threat of effective retaliation by saying we have [other] options."

When interviewing another former middle-level Pentagon official I summarized his comments by formulating the "double image" concept. He responded: "Yeah, I think that's a fair assessment." But he added: "There are really several audiences involved, not just the Russians. . . . You have the ally angle to it too. . . . Most of the allies . . . don't want to believe in escalation control because that implies limiting the war to Europe. And so to them we project: We're prepared to escalate all the way to the top."

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT to understand how a policy maker or strategist can feel satisfied with the double-image approach to the question of escalation control. It may be tricky to suggest simultaneously to the Soviets two conflicting ideas: that the United States believes it can control escalation, and that, in fact, escalation cannot be controlled, while at the same time assuring the Europeans that the United States believes that a war will not be controlled. But the attempt does make sense. It also makes sense, conceptually, that one would want to pursue a variety of political and deterrence-related objectives before entering into a war which may include escalatory signals, but once the war begins, to try to limit it as much possible.

Faced with the need to make a specific decision about whether or not to build hard-target weapons, however, such perceptual arguments turn out to be problematic. The deployment of hard-target-kill capability creates side effects that may be as strong as the desired effects. The effort to strengthen the perception that the United States believes it is possible to limit a war has the potential undesirable side effect of fortifying the Soviet belief that a war may, in fact, be controlled, which may then incrementally weaken deterrence. The effort to strengthen the perception that a nuclear war will necessarily escalate weakens the perception that the United States believes it will remain controlled, and therefore incrementally diminishes the credibility of U.S. threats.

There is also the problem that all audiences tend to hear all messages. Messages designed for Soviet consumption may indicate that the United States is confident it can limit



a war and is therefore not deterred. But these are also heard by Europeans, who become less certain that the United States will not try to limit a war to Europe. Messages designed for Europeans, to the effect that the United States will respond with strategic weapons to an attack on Europe, are also heard by the Soviets and weaken the perceived U.S. confidence in limitations.

There is no compelling reason to believe that the effects desired from the deployment of hard-target-kill weapons do not also lead to side effects of a similar magnitude in the opposite direction.

THE POINT OF ANALYZING these problems in the perceptual rationales for hard-target-kill capability is not to suggest that defense policy makers, by overlooking them, are showing intellectual inadequacy. The resourcefulness they demonstrate in weaving such complex arguments convinces me that they are fully capable of grasping these problems. In fact, some respondents seemed to recognize them as if they had seen them before. In some cases they would then move to yet another "layer" in their rationales. Here they would stop trying to rationalize hard-target-capable weapons in terms of security interests, and instead would speak in terms of satisfying psychological needs.

A Rand analyst, for example, first tried to use security-related arguments to explain the need to match Soviet ICBMs with the MX and the D-5. Each argument he raised led to another question which pointed at its weaknesses. With refreshing intellectual candor, he freely recognized the problems in his arguments but nonetheless went on to others. Finally, after half an hour of this, it seemed that all of his security-related arguments had fallen apart. This did not

seem to surprise him; apparently, he had seen these problems before. Yet he did not indicate any change in his basic attitude. When, once again, I asked him to explain why the United States should match Soviet capabilities he anwered with a slight embarrassment: "I don't know. I just feel better that way." And then with more finality: "I just do."

Others were more comfortable presenting arguments based on psychological needs. Another Rand analyst explained that matching the Soviets is essential for national morale, saying: "A country can have in its own psyche a notion that it is slowly going downhill, or it can have in its psyche a notion that the best is yet to come, and by God, we can solve any problem and do anything. And these things tend to be correlated with—irrationally, perhaps: . . . 'How well are you doing in the superpower arms competition?'"

A former high-level government official and senior analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies explained: "The older I get, the less confident I am that you can change sort of instinctive reactions very much. . . . Self-confidence seems to come from sources that are not on the whole totally rational anyway. And I think the concept of a dynamic military capability is one that is very impressive—especially to Americans who are very change oriented and very modernization oriented."

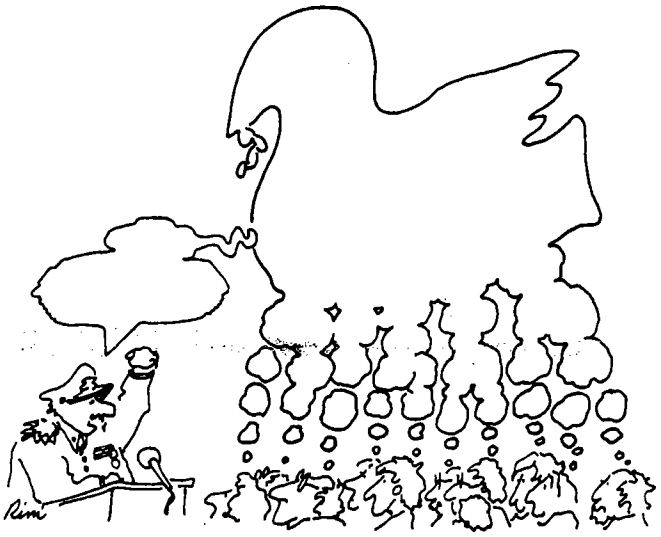
In the public debate one of the major rationales offered for hard-target weapons was based on the idea that a "window of vulnerability" was emerging because of the Soviets' heavy land-based missiles. The MX and the Trident submarines equipped with D-5 missiles were presented as antidotes. However, when I spoke to some individuals who were directly involved in developing the idea of the window of vulnerability, they indicated that the real concern and the proposed solution were of a psychological, not a military, nature. An interview with a government strategic analyst went as follows:

> I (interviewer): So [what is] the different between having the Trident and the MX or not having the Trident and the MX? In a crisis situation, do you think that margin where we would have the counterforce capabilities after an all-out counterforce first strike on their part, versus a situation where we wouldn't . . . do you think that would alter their decision?
> R (respondent): No.
> I: [So] when you talk about the window of vulnerability, you're not really saying that deterrence is threatened.
> R: No. Let's put it this way, in more understandable terms. All roads in the strategic equation lead to MAD [mutual assured destruction]. All the other ones . . . are games, are window dressings, and they are window dressings for upmanship.
> I: Why? To what end?
> R: Prestige, self-assurance.

A State Department official said: "I don't think the weapons themselves were in the end specifically designed to shut up the window; that was one of the rationales given to it. In the end, though, if you want to discuss what buying weapons is about, it's to make yourself feel that you're doing your part for the national defense. . . . [Decision makers] don't think through the use of the weapons—nobody does. . . . We don't only build to impress [the Soviets]—in part you build to impress yourself." But he clarified that it is essential not to make it explicit that the weapons are being built for reasons other than security interests: "You don't say to yourself, 'We're building this so . . . we'll feel better.'"

IT IS DIFFICULT TO specify the most fundamental motivation behind building hard-target weapons. To some extent it can be explained as simply the perseverance of the traditional principle of trying to destroy an enemy's military assets. Indeed, some policy makers interviewed seemed to ignore the basic aspects of nuclear reality that make this principle questionable at best. However, nearly all at some point recognized the military futility of destroying hard targets. Arguments based on manipulating perceptions were clever but had so many logical flaws, many of which respondents recognized, that it is hard to conclude that they constitute the "real" reasons policy makers support deployment.

The rationales based on domestic psychological needs seemed the most credible explanations of policy makers' behavior. Only a minority articulated this line of thinking. But the fact that others had such trouble constructing a coherent argument—as well as the fact that government employees have incentives to accommodate domestic psychological needs—suggests that they, too, might well be motivated, consciously or unconsciously, by these concerns.



If psychological needs are indeed shaping defense policy in these fundamental ways, this is reason for concern. The policy of building hard-target weapons, for example, is not without costs in terms of American security. Developing these capabilities encourages the Soviets to keep their missiles on a higher level of alert, increasing the chance that a crisis or miscalculation will lead to a conflagration. While following the traditional path of trying to destroy an enemy's military assets might make people "feel better," there may be more appropriate ways to adapt to the reality engendered by nuclear weapons. □

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Economic growth is not the answer to our problems

MARK SATIN/*NEW OPTIONS*

Despite their surface differences, all the major presidential candidates have had the same underlying economic goal: to make the economy grow and grow and grow. Even their rhetoric differs little on this issue. Bush, the conservative standard-bearer, pledges to "sustain America's economic growth." Dukakis, the liberal challenger, says he is "committed to vibrant and sustained economic growth."

That rhetoric is repeated—often even more forcefully—by our "alternative" political periodicals. *The Nation, Mother Jones, In These Times, National Review* . . . all of them want to get this economy growing again. None of them suggests that most of us can already meet our genuine material needs. None of them suggests that our larger socioeconomic problems may have more to do with values than with economics. None of them suggests that what we're getting from our overheated economy may be less than what we're giving up.

Over the last 10 years or so, a number of social scientists have begun to write about alternatives to a constantly growing economy. Probably the best known are Herman Daly, economist, author of *Steady State Economics* (1977), and Paul Wachtel, psychologist, author of *The Poverty of Affluence.* But their ideas are rarely discussed on the traditional left or right.

[*Editors' note:* Utne Reader *thought you'd be interested in what these authors have to say about what might be the major issue of discussion in this election year: how America should cope with its troubled economic situation.* New Options *editor Mark Satin elicited the following thoughts from Wachtel and Daly at a conference, "Economics as if the Earth Matters: The Case Against Growth," held last November at Camp New Hope in North Carolina.*]

Paul Wachtel

We *are* destroying our environment through continued economic growth. But I think the way advocates of the "small-is-beautiful" philosophy have tried to communicate this message has been faulty. Very often, the message that seems to be coming through is that we've got to tighten our belts; we've got to give up a lot; we've got to get off the gravy train. As long as your message is that people's standard of living has got to go down, people are going to be powerfully motivated not to hear that message. People don't want to live worse—and that's very understandable.

I think that's an erroneous way to promote a no-growth economy. Because what it leaves out is all the ways our present way of life *doesn't work.* And not only does it not work ecologically (which we all know), it doesn't work psychologically. It doesn't bring us the kinds of satisfactions we assume it brings.

There are very powerful side effects of economic growth that make its benefits questionable. I

want to focus on a few: uprooting, isolation, and the endless stirring of desire.

Let's start with uprooting, which has been at the heart of the development of Western society for the last couple of hundred years. Most of this uprooting has been *geographic.* People don't stay put. They don't stay in stable communities, which is how people have lived throughout most of human history. Think of the stress that that creates in people.

What we're getting now from our overheated economy may be more than we're giving up.

There's also been an uprooting of *customs and traditions.* The framework of religious meaning has been eroded for millions and millions of people, and the introduction of various secular value systems has not compensated sufficiently.

Then there's the uprooting from *family and family ties.* From the beginning of the industrial revolution, people sought to deal with the weakening of satisfying ties to loved ones and neighbors caused by employment outside the home. The way they sought to deal with it was by compensating through increased material comforts. That was the strategy taken by most people in the modern world. The irony, though, is that it led to a kind of vicious circle: The effort to make up for what was missing in our lives by accumulating more goods had the effect of leading us to live in ways that further undermined the traditional sources of gratification of family and friends.

In order to be "successful" in the modern world, you have to be willing to live a certain kind of life; you have to be willing to give first priority to work and the accumulation of consumer goods. And as you do that, you undermine your ties to family and community and other human relationships.

When you say to your kids, "Don't bother me now! I'm working," you then have to work even harder. Because every time you undermine your more gratifying family and community ties, your need to compensate with material goods becomes greater. And the circle keeps on generating itself.

It's fascinating to look at the linguistic choices a culture makes. The constant sense in the '70s, on television and radio, was that we were in decline, that we were going through hard times. You could hardly speak to somebody in the '70s without mentioning hard times.

But were times "hard"? Even assuming that, yes, people's wages were no longer going up, one could reasonably describe that as "stability." But you didn't hear, on the radio, "We have another year of stability." You heard about "stagnation." When stability is described as stagnation, it tells you something about the psychology of our culture.

Since there's been economic growth over the last 30 to 40 years, one would expect that surveys would show there's been a progressive increase in people's reported well-being. Yet in fact, well-being, as reported in opinion polls, reached its peak in 1957.

The reason why economic growth no longer brings a sense of well-being is that at the level of affluence of the American middle-class what really matters is not one's material possessions but one's psychological resources: richness of human relations, and freedom from the conflicts and constrictions that prevent us from enjoying what we have. At the root of our present malaise is our tendency to try to use economics to solve what are really psychological problems.

One rationale for economic growth has been that it's only through growth that we can help the poor. What doesn't get noticed is that the stock of possessions held by the typical poor person in America includes the kinds of items that would have defined a middle-class or even upper-class style of life not very long ago.

Once, having a television set was exciting; now it's horrendous to think anybody could live without one. Once, having a color set was an exciting idea. Now that's not affluence, it's just what you need to have in order not to be classified as poor.

Poor people are really poor. They're poor because in America, when you have less than most everybody else, your experience of life is of deprivation,

The way we have tried to convey the "small-is-beautiful" message has been faulty.

of despair, of not being respected, of being low man on the totem pole. But no amount of growth can change that! Being low man on the totem pole is painful, no matter how high the totem pole is.

We have this myth in America of upward mobility. It flies in the face of logic! Because no matter how much growth you have, only 10 percent of the population can be in the top 10 percent; only 50 percent can be in the upper 50 percent. There is no way that can change.

It is an illusion to believe that growth can elimi-

nate poverty, which is really the result of how goods are distributed, [and how our culture judges those with relatively few goods].

If our isolated, individualistic, striving way of life is in large measure responsible for our economic problems, then that points us toward the alternative: a way of life characterized by interdependency and affectionate interchange between people who treat everyone as equals. This alternative would have something to do with equality and sharing and intimacy and openness and cooperative efforts . . . and being able to "go home again."

Herman Daly

If you want to learn about the economy, you have to watch the television commercials. By far the most penetrating insight for me recently has come from an ad for Merrill Lynch. The scene opens with a bull trotting along an empty beach. Now this bull is obviously a very powerful animal. Nothing is likely to stop him. And there's a chorus in the background as the bull trots along, and it goes "To know no boundaries . . . ." Abruptly the scene shifts. The bull is now trotting across a bridge that spans a deep gorge. There are no cars or bicycles or 18-wheel trucks crossing this bridge. So again the bull is alone, in an empty world, unobstructed by anything.

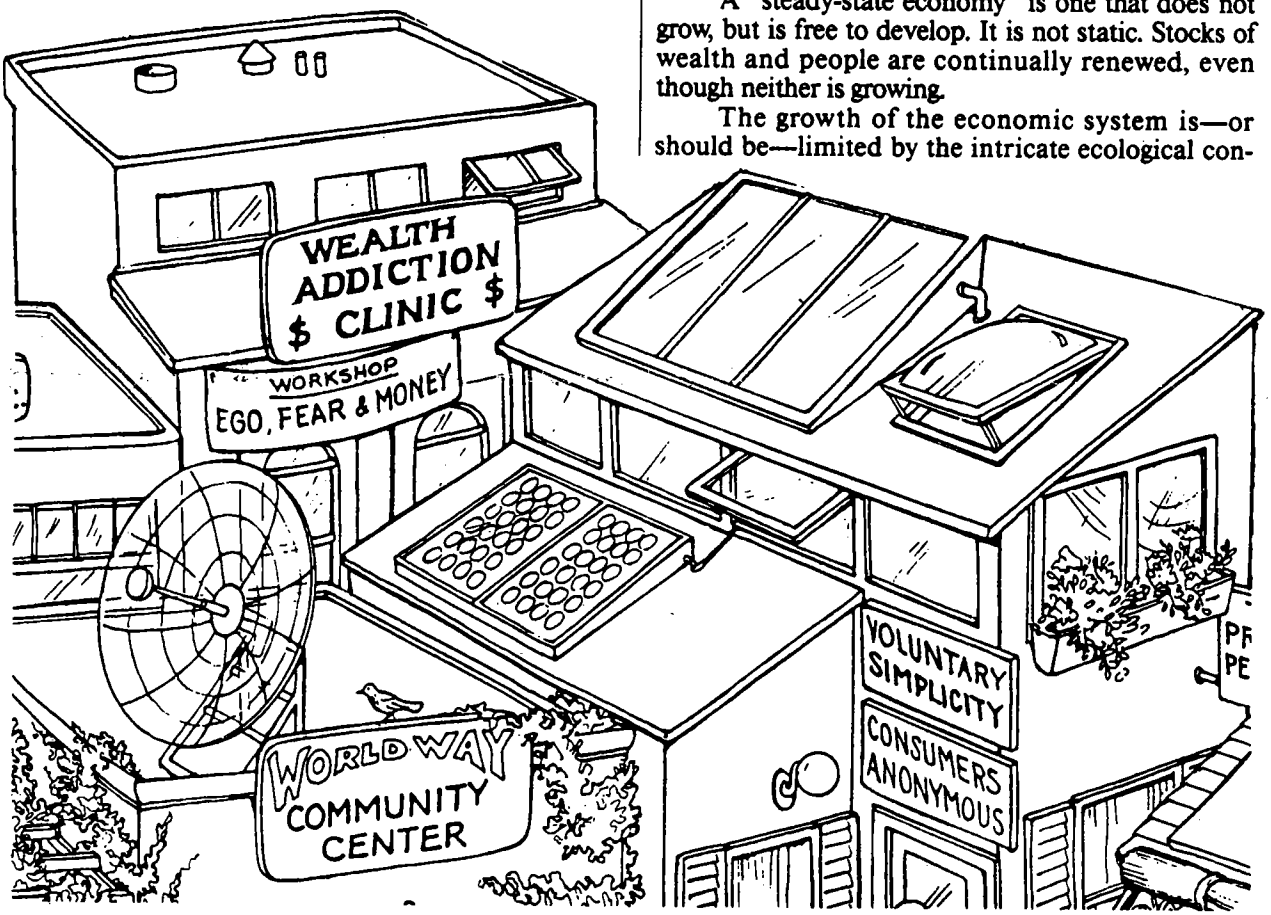
What are we being told by this set of images? I think Merrill Lynch wants to put us into a world of individualistic, macho "no limits." An empty world where strong and solitary individualists have free reign. In addition to television commercials, this vision can also be found in Ronald Reagan's speeches—and in economics textbooks.

But the real world is not empty. It may be empty of people of European background but full of other people. It may be empty of people but full of other species. We live in a full world with countless moral and ecological bonds.

Why does Merrill Lynch regale us with this boundless bull? Ultimately what they're selling you is growth. The boundless bull is always on the move. What if, like Ferdinand, it sits and smells the flowers? That would not do! If you're selling growth, you also have to sell restless, prodding discontent. Merrill Lynch is promoting the growth model of economics. I believe that we need a new economic model that takes into account human and ecological limits—what I call the steady-state economy.

A "steady-state economy" is one that does not grow, but is free to develop. It is not static. Stocks of wealth and people are continually renewed, even though neither is growing.

The growth of the economic system is—or should be—limited by the intricate ecological con-



nections that are harmed if the economic system grows. If the economic system is to break out of ecological limits, then economists and politicians must discover an "ultimate resource" that is both infinite in amount and infinitely substitutable for other resources. And of course they're trying. The "ultimate resource" is variously referred to as technology, information, knowledge, or the human mind.

Well, clearly it's a risky business to try to specify limits to knowledge. But it's equally dangerous to suppose that new knowledge will always abolish old limits faster than it discovers new ones. The discovery of uranium was "new knowledge"—but discovery of the effects of radioactivity was also new knowledge. And that didn't expand the usefulness of the uranium resource base; rather, it contracted it.

Whenever you suggest an alternative to growth, all people can think of is "non-growth." And they begin to worry. And their worries are not unjustified.

If you stop growing in a growth economy, you're in trouble! It's like an airplane that's designed for forward motion. If it stops in the air, it's going to crash. It just wasn't meant to do that. It doesn't mean there's no such thing as a helicopter—which *can* stay still in the air; but you can't do it with an airplane.

So you've got to ask: How do you convert the growth airplane into a steady-state helicopter? What do you have to redesign?

We can't start from point zero; we have to start from our given historical condition. And our given condition is that we operate in a system of private property in a market economy. You may want to have a revolution and wipe those out. I'm not interested. I don't think we have the time or the leadership or the wisdom to come up with anything better. But I think those institutions can be bent—can be redesigned—to a certain degree. I think they can be bent and stretched enough to permit us to convert to a steady-state economy.

If you're selling economic growth, you also have to sell restless discontent.

Three things are essential to the creation of a steady-state economy: limiting population, limiting depletion of resources, and limiting the range of permissible inequality.

By definition, a steady-state economy requires limits on the population of human bodies. I don't know the best way to control population. There are many possibilities, ranging from the coercive Chinese system to complete laissez-faire.

By definition, a steady-state economy requires limits on the production of goods. In my opinion, the best way to do that is on the input side. Because there are fewer mines and wells than there are garbage cans and smokestacks. And if you're limiting input, then indirectly—at the other end of the pipeline—you're limiting output.

It is an illusion to believe that economic growth can eliminate poverty, which is the result of how goods are distributed.

Limiting input can be accomplished in several ways. I've suggested a "depletion quota" on basic natural resources. The government would control the rate of depletion of resources such as oil, even though ownership rights would remain in private hands. Another economist has suggested a "national severance tax." By taxing depletion we'd lower the input and output to some socially determined level. Either approach would raise the cost of resources. And we'd all have to be more conserving in our use of resources.

A steady-state economy may also require minimum and maximum limits on income. The idea of a minimum income has a lot of support from economists. It could be implemented with a subsidy, through the income tax system, to lower-income families.

The maximum limit is more controversial. Plato thought that the richest citizens ought to be four times as wealthy as the poorest. I don't know where he got that number; I would suggest maybe 10 times. Where do I get that number? Well, there is some empirical evidence for it. In the civil service, the ratio of the highest level to the lowest is about 10 to one. Same in the military. Same in the university.

The idea of minimum and maximum limits on income is not central to my definition of the steady-state. But it's important in the interest of justice, and I think it's essential to community. Community really cannot tolerate unlimited inequality. And without justice and community there can be no steady-state economy. ■

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