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Why will the Soviets suspect that Star Wars II is designed to support a first-strike strategy? Because a leaky umbrella offers no protection in a downpour, but is quite useful in a drizzle. That is, such a defense would collapse under a full-scale Soviet first strike, but might cope adequately with the depleted Soviet forces that had survived a US first strike.

And that is what causes the problem. President Reagan, in a little-remembered sentence in his March 23, 1983, speech, said, "If paired with offensive systems, [defensive systems] can be viewed as fostering an aggressive policy, and no one wants that." The President was concerned that the Soviets would regard a decision to supplement — rather than replace — our offensive forces with defensive ones as an attempt to achieve a first-strike capability. Reagan has subsequently said, "I think that would be the most dangerous thing in the world, for either one of us to be seen as having the capacity for a first strike." But that is exactly how Moscow is interpreting the US program.

If the Soviets do not accept the statements of those who support Star Wars II — if they do not accept that SDI is not part of a first-strike strategy, but only a means of strengthening deterrence — how will they respond?

It would be foolhardy for Washington to dismiss as mere propaganda Moscow's repeated warnings that a nationwide US strategic defense is highly provocative. Their promise to respond with a large offensive buildup 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 have said we would respond to a Soviet strategic defense plan in exactly the same way as they have stated they would respond to ours. We can safely conclude, therefore, from both the US and Soviet statements, that any attempt to strengthen deterrence by adding strategic defensive to strategic offensive forces will lead to a rapid escalation of the arms race.

To meet the threat of arms escalation, Paul Nitze, President Reagan's arms control advisor, has articulated a new US "strategic concept" for a cooperative shift to a Star Wars world: "What we have in mind is a jointly managed transition, in which the United States and the Soviet Union would together phase in new defenses in a controlled manner while continuing to reduce offensive nuclear arms." The President has gone further by proposing a delay in the deployment of Star Wars until all offensive ballistic missiles have been destroyed.

Although Nitze has made it clear that strategic defensive forces should not be deployed other than in accordance with the terms of an arms control agreement, no human mind has conceived of how to write such a treaty. Nitze himself has said that the transition to Star Wars would be "tricky":

Why has no one been able to outline the content of such a treaty? Because neither US nor Soviet experts can figure out how both to reduce offensive forces and permit defensive deployment, while at the same time giving each side adequate confidence in maintaining its highest goal: assuring an effective nuclear deterrent against nuclear attack.

So it can be said without qualification: we cannot have both deployment of Star Wars and arms control. That was confirmed at Reykjavik.

In sum, I can see no way by which the US deployment of an antiballistic missile defense will strengthen deterrence.

But assume, for a moment, that this were not the case. Is there an alternative means of achieving Henry Kissinger's goal? He fears the Soviets have now, or will achieve in the future, a first-strike capability. It is that which he is trying to offset or prevent. Can that be accomplished at less cost, with greater certainty, and with less risk of fueling the arms race by some means other than SDI?

The Scowcroft Commission, appointed by the President, said yes, based on the simple approach of reducing the ratio of the number of accurate Soviet warheads to the number of US vulnerable land-based missiles. This could be done through negotiation with the Soviet Union or by replacing our potentially vulnerable fixed-base missiles (Minutemen) with mobile missiles (Midgetmen), or by a combination of the two approaches. Gorbachev has already indicated a willingness to move in this direction if we would reduce our threat to his forces by similar moves.

To summarize, none of these rationales for Star Wars II offers a satisfactory approach to reducing the risk of nuclear war in the decades that lie ahead. And they carry the certainty of high cost and a dangerous escalation of the arms race.

We are left, then, to turn to our final option: a reexamination of the military role of nuclear weapons.

## **5. WAR PLANS AND ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT NUCLEAR WARHEADS ARE NOT USABLE WEAPONS**

Earlier I stated that no one had ever developed a plan for initiating the use of such weapons with benefit to the West. More and more Western military and civilian leaders, including Lord Carver and Lord Mountbatten, Admiral Noel A. Gayler (former Commander in Chief of US Ground, Air, and Sea Forces in the Pacific), and Melvin Laird (Secretary of Defense in the Nixon Administration) are publicly acknowledging this fact.

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 conventional force aggression being worth the risk of nuclear war in the event that deterrence fails.

But as more and more Western political and military leaders recognize, and as they publicly avow, that the launch of strategic nuclear weapons against the Soviet homeland — or even the use of battlefield nuclear weapons — would bring greater destruction to the West than any conceivable contribution they might make to its defense, there is less and less likelihood that the West 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 the West's nuclear strategy will diminish still further. One cannot build a credible deterrent on an incredible action.

There are additional factors to be considered. Whether it contributes to deterrence or not, the threat of first use is not without its costs. It is a most contentious policy, leading to divisive debates both within Western Europe and North America; it reduces the West's preparedness for conventional war; and, as I have indicated, it greatly increases the risk of nuclear war.

The costs of whatever deterrent value remains in the West's nuclear strategy are substantial. Could not equivalent deterrence be achieved at lower "cost"? I believe the answer is yes. Compared with the huge risks that we now run by relying on increasingly less credible nuclear threats, recent studies have pointed to ways by which conventional forces may be strengthened at modest military, political, and economic cost.

The West has not done so because there is today no consensus among its military and civilian leaders on the military role of nuclear weapons.

There is, however, a slow but discernible movement toward acceptance of three facts:

- The West's existing plans for initiating the use of nuclear weapons, if implemented, are far more likely to destroy Western Europe, North America, and Japan than to defend them. The Soviet Union faces a similar dilemma.
- Whatever deterrent value remains in the West's nuclear strategy, it is eroding and is purchased at heavy cost.
- The strength, and hence the deterrent capability, of Western conventional forces can be increased substantially within realistic political and financial constraints.

It is on the basis of these facts that I propose both sides 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 military plans, defense budgets, weapons development programs, and arms negotiations on the proposition.

The ultimate goal should be a state of mutual deterrence at the lowest force levels consistent with stability.

If the Soviet Union and the United States were to agree, in principal, 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?

When discussing Gorbachev's proposal for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, I pointed out that a nuclear-free world, while desirable in principal, was infeasible under foreseeable circumstances because the fear of cheating in such an agreement would be very great indeed. I stressed, however, that policing an arms agreement that restricted each side to a small number of warheads is quite feasible with present verification technology. The number required for a force sufficiently large to deter cheating would be determined by the number the Soviets could build without detection by NATO. I know of no studies that point to what that number might be, but surely it would not exceed a few hundred — say, at most, 500. Very possibly it would be far less.

## CONCLUSION

I conclude, therefore, that the second half century of the nuclear age need not be a repetition of the first.

We can — indeed, we must — move away from the ad hoc decision making of the past several decades. It is this process that 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 warfighting strategies and nuclear arsenals capable of destroying civilization several times over.

Through public debate, a debate in which citizens throughout the world — the potential victims of nuclear war — have both the capability and 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 programs. That must be our goal.

Most Americans are simply unaware that Western strategy calls for early initiation of the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict with the Soviets. Eighty percent 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 destruction of our society.

But those are the facts.

In truth, the Emperor has no clothes. Our present nuclear policy is indeed bankrupt.

President Reagan's intuitive reaction that we must change course — that we must recognize that nuclear warheads cannot be used as military weapons — is correct. To continue as in the past would be totally irresponsible.

When I began this lecture I referred to three crises from my own term as Secretary of Defense: Soviet pressure on Berlin in 1961; the introduction of missiles into Cuba in 1962; and the Middle East War in 1967. My purpose was to provide a personal perspective on one of the central themes of this statement: Things can go wrong. Actions can lead to unintended consequences. Signals can be misread. Technologies can fail. Crises can escalate, even if neither side wants war.

Four recent events — the shooting down of Korean Air Lines Flight 007, leading to the death of 269 civilians; the explosion of the US space shuttle Challenger; the nuclear reactor accident at Chernobyl; and the recent poisonous spill in the Rhine — reinforce this point. They serve to remind us all how often we are the victims of misinformation, mistaken judgments, and human fallibility. It is inconceivable to me that in a crisis situation, with all its inevitable pressures, decisions regarding the use of nuclear weapons would be unaffected by such factors.

The loss of KAL 007 was a great tragedy. But a similar error in judgment leading to the launch of nuclear weapons would be an unparalleled disaster. We must act to avoid such a disaster by making less and less likely the use of these weapons. The course we have been following for nearly half a century has been taking us precisely in the opposite direction.

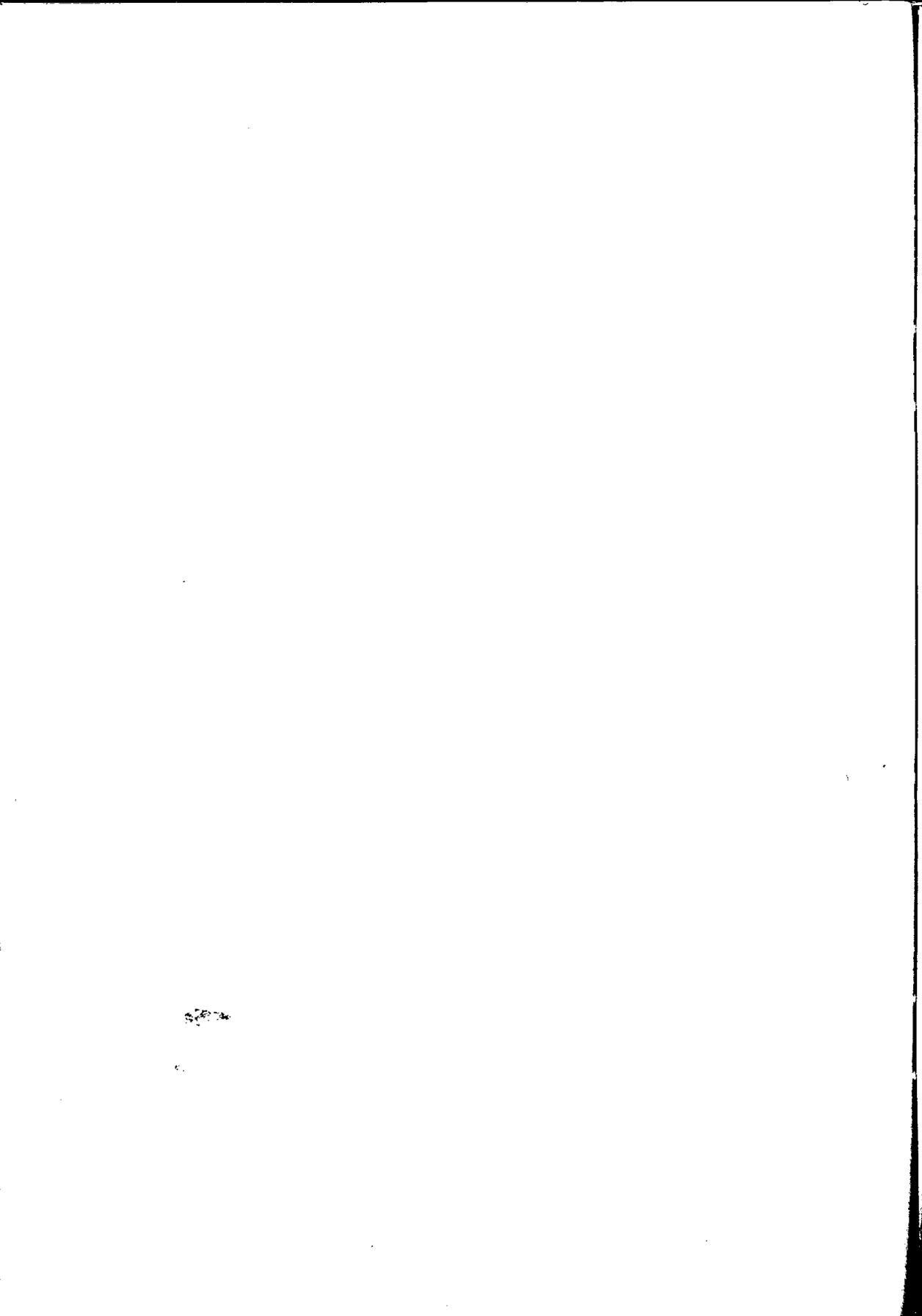
The arms negotiations now under way — and particularly the proposals put forward at Reykjavik for reductions in strategic offensive forces — represent an historic opportunity

to change course and to take the first step toward the long-term goals I have outlined. We can lay the foundation for entering the twenty-first century with a totally different nuclear strategy, one of mutual security instead of warfighting; with vastly smaller nuclear forces, no more than 1,000 weapons in place of 50,000; and with a dramatically lower risk that civilization will be destroyed.

We have reached the present dangerous and absurd confrontation by a long series of steps, many of which seemed to be rational in their time. Step by step, we can undo much of the damage.

The program I have presented would, I believe, initiate that process. But whether or not there is acceptance of my specific proposals, we can surely agree on this: we must develop a consensus for a long-term strategy for the second half century of the nuclear age — a strategy that will reduce the unacceptable risks we now face and begin to restore confidence in the future.

Is not our first duty and obligation to assure, beyond doubt, the survival of our civilization?



## ROBERT S. McNAMARA

Educated at the University of California and the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Mr. McNamara joined Ford Motor Company in 1946 and became its President in 1960. Just one year later, following the presidential election of John F. Kennedy, he was appointed US Secretary of Defense.

From 1968 to 1981, Mr. McNamara was President of the World Bank. In recent years, he has been Director of many US corporations and public institutions and has devoted much of his time to research and writing in the field of arms control. *Blundering into Disaster* (1986) is his most recent book-length publication.

Mr. McNamara is the recipient of numerous honorary degrees and national and international awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Albert Einstein Peace Prize, and the Dag Hammarskjöld Honorary Medal.

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