

Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 116: To Reduce Military Tensions in Europe, Ban Conscription

March 19, 1989

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Executive Summary

The East-West confrontation is now experiencing its most profound improvement since the end of World War II. The ratification of the treaty eliminating intermediate nuclear forces (INF) is a significant arms control achievement: not only is it the first agreement to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons, but it represents a tangible expression of the new Soviet principle of "asymmetrical reductions," in which the side that is militarily superior is required to make disproportionate reductions to achieve parity. This principle was reinforced in December 1988, when Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev pledged to reduce the USSR's armed forces by 500,000 men, including significant cuts in the armored divisions in Eastern Europe. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, combined with pressure on other clients to resolve their regional disputes, also suggests that Moscow is questioning the value of expansionism. Perhaps most important, the Soviets have begun to discuss domestic changes that, if implemented, could mean the dismantling of the Leninist totalitarian state.[1]

These developments, unthinkable just a few short years ago, are full of hope for an end to the cold war. At the same time, however, they present a challenge to the Western democracies, for these changes cannot take place in an international vacuum. How can the West encourage such positive developments in the Soviet Union while also safeguarding its own security?

This question has special importance in the context of the conventional stability talks in Europe, which for all practical purposes have replaced the fruitless talks on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) that have dragged on in Vienna for years. In line with their policy of asymmetrical reductions, the Soviets acknowledge that they are superior in armored vehicles and therefore should make disproportionate reductions in these weapons--and as noted, they have pledged to undertake such reductions unilaterally. In turn, however, they want NATO countries to make disproportionate reductions in tactical aircraft.[2] To promote this negotiating framework, Soviet officials recently proposed a three-phased plan. First, the two sides would exchange data, which would allow them to identify and eliminate the existing asymmetries. With parity thus established, NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries would reduce their force levels by 500,000 troops. Finally, the two sides would restructure their forces to make them incapable of offensive operations.[3]

NATO leaders are resisting this formula. They object to the initial trade-off on the grounds that the weapons are not truly comparable (e.g., aircraft, unlike tanks, can deliver nuclear weapons, and are therefore not purely "conventional" forces). In addition they contend that NATO's advantages are being overstated and that the Warsaw Pact has more bombers, interceptors, and armed helicopters. Questions have also been raised about the verifiability of a limit on

aircraft.[4]

Unfortunately, NATO members so far have been unable to decide what they should offer in response to the Soviet proposal. Their indecision, in turn, is leading to erosion of popular support for the alliance in Europe, and many Europeans are beginning to compare the United States unfavorably with the Soviet Union. In January 1988 the Wall Street Journal reported that "only 24 percent of the German public view the Soviet Union as a military threat today, the lowest level in the 25 years since the German Defense Ministry began tracking such sentiment." [5] In the last years of the Reagan administration, it was commonplace for the Soviet Union and Mr. Gorbachev to outscore the United States and Mr. Reagan in European opinion polls. [6]

Such sentiment presents a serious challenge to leaders of the Western democracies. NATO is more than a military alliance designed to counter Soviet military power: it is an association of countries that share common democratic values. Those values are now being put to the test by Soviet overtures. Given the very real concessions offered by Moscow, the alliance members must respond with something, and ideally with something that has military significance and that captures popular imagination .

One proposal that could serve this purpose would be a ban on conscription. Such a proposal would be a dramatic departure from traditional arms control measures, but it has the simplicity of the zero-option, which was essential to demonstrating American sincerity in the INF negotiations. In addition a ban on conscription would markedly improve conventional stability, for can anyone imagine a major conventional war in Europe without the power to conscript?

Military Reasons for Banning Conscription

The difficulty in achieving conventional force reductions in Europe is a result of the asymmetries that need to be recognized, notably NATO's lack of strategic depth compared with the Warsaw Pact and America's distant separation from the European continent.

This separation has bedeviled the prospects of serious conventional force reductions in Europe. U.S. troops would return to the United States, an ocean away from Europe, while Soviet troops returning to the USSR would remain within striking distance of Western Europe. In addition it is likely that U.S. forces returning to the United States would be demobilized if another mission could not be found for them, since it is unreasonable to expect American taxpayers to support indefinitely a capability to reinforce Europe in an atmosphere of successful negotiations.

Thus, unless the withdrawal of forces was accompanied by demobilization on both sides, the geographical asymmetry would compromise efforts to establish military force symmetries. As long as the Soviets maintain conscription, however, there will be a structural limit to the extent of the USSR's demobilization. To be sure, this limit will vary with the size of the draft-age cohort, and the Soviets could always reduce the length of compulsory military service. (Another option, increasing exemptions, is being discussed, but any significant effort in this regard would clash with the constitutional obligation of universal military service.) Nevertheless, the size of the Soviet conscript force, which alone may exceed the size of the U.S. armed forces by more than 750,000 men, is so great that it is difficult to see how these more limited measures could seriously redress this asymmetry. [7]

Moreover, conscription provides the Soviets with another advantage: a large number of reservists. According to The Military Balance 1988-1989, the Soviets have more than 6.2 million reservists who were conscripts within the last five years. This figure compares with just over 1.6 million total active reservists and National Guardsmen in the United States and approximately 5.5 million comparable reservists in the rest of NATO combined. [8] In short, even if the Soviets reduced the size of their active force by cutting the time of active service for conscripts, this problem of asymmetry in reserve forces, with its ominous implications for mobilization capability for a European conflict, would remain if the Soviet Union continued conscription.

Finally, conscription is universal in the Warsaw Pact countries but selective in NATO countries. Tables 1 and 2 list the size of the armed forces of the member of each alliance, including the number of conscripts. Over half of the active forces in the Warsaw Pact are conscripts, and 80 percent of these are Soviet forces. By contrast, only 33 percent of NATO forces are conscripts, and none of these are U.S. forces. These asymmetries mean that a ban on conscription has evident military advantages for the West.

Table 1 NATO Armed Forces		
Country	Total Forces	Conscripts
United States	2,163,200	0
Belgium	88,300	26,500
Canada	84,600	0
Denmark	29,300	8,400
France	456,900	238,500
West Germany	488,700	222,600
Greece	214,000	140,500
Italy	386,000	270,500
Luxembourg	800	0
Netherlands	106,100	50,000
Norway	35,800	23,000
Portugal	73,900	44,800
Spain	309,500	206,000
Turkey	635,300	575,800
United Kingdom	316,700	0
Total NATO	5,389,100	1,806,600

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1988-1989 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1988).

Table 2 Warsaw Pact Armed Forces		
Country	Total Forces	Conscripts
Soviet Union	5,096,00	3,000,000
Bulgaria	157,800	94,000
Czechoslovakia	197,000	118,000
East Germany	172,000	94,500
Hungary	99,000	64,000
Poland	406,000	107,500
Total WP	6,307,300	3,709,000

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1988-1989 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1988).

Political Reasons for Banning Conscription

The political reasons for banning conscription are even more compelling than the military reasons, for conscription in the Soviet Union serves a fundamental role in the political indoctrination of all young men. According to A. A. Yepishev, the late head of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet army and navy:

The Soviet Army plays an enormous role in the education of the millions of young people who go through our military

service. . . . The army . . . in fact plays the role of "nation-wide university" which practically all the male citizens of the country "finish."

Consequently, besides fulfilling their main mission, that of being a reliable defender of the socialist Motherland, the Soviet Armed Forces play a major social role and perform educational tasks set by the state in the Present conditions.[9]

Conscription and Military Indoctrination

The armed forces' indoctrinational role has been supplemented by a program of military-patriotic education for schoolchildren. Expanded in the mid-1960s under Leonid Brezhnev's direction, "the system envisages purposeful preparation of students for defense of the homeland starting with the first days of their presence at the school in accordance with the peculiarities of their age group." [10] Ideological instruction in this program has stressed that "the education of love for the socialist Motherland is inseparable from the education of burning hatred for our class enemies--the imperialists." [11] According to a 1977 text published by DOSAAF, the Voluntary Organization for Assistance to the Army, Air Force, and Navy, a paramilitary organization geared toward providing predraft youth with military skills, "the Communist Party assigns great importance to the education in every Soviet person of a feeling of class hatred for the enemies of communism, for the imperialist aggressors." [12]

Significantly, this program of indoctrination has continued even after Brezhnev's death. Konstantin Chernenko told the Young Communist League in May 1984 that "work in military-political education must be undertaken more widely. With even more insistence, feelings must be nurtured in young people of love for the homeland and hatred for its enemies." [13] Eduard Shevardnadze, Gorbachev's handpicked foreign minister, emphasized in July 1985 that "patriotic and internationalist education . . . must not slacken even for a moment but must be constantly carried out and be the object of our most urgent concern." [14] And the 1986 Communist party program also stressed that "an important task of the party's ideological education work remains military-patriotic education." [15]

Thus, both conscription and the program of military-patriotic education that supports it affect the political climate within the Soviet Union, strengthening the hand of those seeking to prevent a peaceful resolution of differences between East and West. A ban on conscription would remove this "nation-wide university" as a tool of indoctrination, and would thereby contribute to a realignment of political power inside the Soviet Union in a manner favorable to Western interests and peace in Europe.

Such a proposal would present Soviet officials with a profound challenge. The obligation of universal military service is part of the Soviet Constitution, which is itself an indication of the power of the military in the Soviet political establishment. This obligation also defines the relationship of the individual to the state. According to a 1986 Pravda article, "the USSR citizen's most important duty is to defend the socialist fatherland and do military service within the ranks of the USSR Armed Forces." [16] Presumably, if military service is the Soviet citizen's (actually the Soviet male's) "most important duty," then the elimination of conscription would help alter the value system on which Soviet rule is based. In other words, if Soviet citizens learn that their most important duty is not so indispensable after all, other arbitrary limits on their freedom could become subject to challenge. Yet if some Soviet officials would recoil from this proposal, the Soviet people would applaud it, for conscription is among the most hated institutions in the USSR, and draft evasion is an openly acknowledged problem. [17] In 1987, for example, Pravda reported a case in which someone who had been registered as a female "mysteriously turned into a father of three children." Perhaps most revealing, Pravda noted that "of course, he was not held responsible for evading army service. And this is not an exceptional case." [18]

A U.S. proposal to ban conscription would also find a resonance among the Soviet Union's Warsaw Pact allies, which now confront public movements favoring conscientious objection. [19] In Poland, for example, a new law on alternative military service went into effect in September 1988, allowing young men to perform three years of community service in lieu of two years in the army. [20] In East Germany antiwar groups are also active in seeking alternatives to compulsory military service, putting their hopes in Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika. [21]

Indeed, Gorbachev himself has suggested that he might be receptive to such a proposal. On a recent visit to a conference of the Young Communist League (Komsomol), a student asked him why the Soviet Union needs such a

large army, indicating the unpopularity of conscription even among the most dedicated young Communists. Gorbachev replied that "we must take a good look at the questions of army service and conscription." In particular, he noted, "the length of service . . . could be changed." Nevertheless, he stressed that the Soviet Union could go only so far in this direction as long as it confronts other armies, adding pointedly that "that is why we intend to take steps with other states to reduce our armies and armaments." [22] It would be difficult to imagine a more open invitation for a Western initiative.

Incentives for Moscow to Accept a Ban

Why would Gorbachev be interested in large conventional force reductions, including a ban on military conscription? The answer is that his "new thinking" reflects a revised assessment of the threat facing the Soviet Union. "The group of Soviet troops in Germany is a guarantee that the past will not repeat itself. Could it repeat itself? Could a second Hitler emerge?" asked an April 1988 *Izvestia* article. "No, history never copies itself exactly. Do the Americans covet our territory? No, because they ascribe [sic] to ideas of maintaining their influence in the world by means other than the seizure of territory." [23]

But if the Americans do not covet Soviet territory, if history cannot repeat itself, why does the Soviet Union need such a large and expensive military force? The view that it needs such forces to enhance its status as a superpower and promote its influence in the world is now being seriously challenged. According to a May 1988 article in *Literary Gazette*, "clear-cut notions about the Soviet Union's true national-state interests were lacking" in the Brezhnev era. "Those interests by no means included the pursuit of essentially petty, pro forma gains connected with top-level coups in certain developing countries. Our true interest was in ensuring a favorable international atmosphere for profound transformations in the Soviet union's economy and in its social and political system." [24]

As the article makes clear, Moscow's attention is shifting from foreign to domestic concerns. Recent revelations about a large budget deficit that has existed for several years underscore this point. Just as the United States cannot continue the military buildup of the early Reagan years because of the pressure of its budget deficit, so the Soviets are recognizing that they also must make economies. In Georgy Arbatov's blunt words, "the task of foreign policy is to help solve internal problems through new political options leading to a cut in military allocations." [25] In other words, if the Soviet Union cannot cut its budget deficit, in large part by cutting defense expenditures, it will be in serious trouble. As Gorbachev himself acknowledged at the 19th party conference, "the budget deficit is pressing down upon the market, undermining the stability of the ruble and of monetary circulation as a whole." [26]

Indeed, the dire budgetary situation undoubtedly was a major factor behind the decision to cut conventional forces unilaterally. As Gorbachev explained in a speech last January 7, "the [budgetary] question is so acute that we will have to look at our spending on defense. Preliminary studies show that we can cut it without lowering the level of security and the country's ability to defend itself." [27] Apparently anticipating such cutbacks, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, the former chief of the General Staff, told a military gathering last summer that in the future "troops and fleets will probably receive less" and that they should be prepared "to resolve tasks with fewer combat resources." [28]

Nevertheless, as Akhromeyev's resignation last December suggests, such unilateral measures will encounter far more domestic resistance than a negotiated agreement involving reciprocal--even if unequal--cuts on the Western side. Indeed, in a recent article in the *Washington Post*, Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Karpov, while noting Moscow's readiness "to move further in making Soviet armed forces exclusively defensive," warned that "to do this we need cooperation with the NATO countries and negotiated solutions." [29] Anyone who dismisses the limits on Gorbachev's unilateral freedom of action should recall the fate of Nikita Khrushchev and what happened to Soviet military expenditures after he was overthrown.

Possible Objections

Although the military and political reasons for a mutual ban on conscription are compelling, there are specific questions that need to be addressed before such a proposal can be made responsibly.

Verification Issues

First, is a ban on conscription verifiable? In particular, could the Soviet Union continue to conscript large numbers of young men and simply call them volunteers? It is difficult to see how such deception could succeed. For such a scheme to have any military effect, it would have to be conducted on a massive scale, and thus would be a fraud on the Soviet people as well as an attempt to deceive the West. In a period of glasnost, the Soviet people could be expected to voice their outrage loudly if their government treated them in this manner.

Furthermore, a ban on conscription would force the Soviet Union to shift some of its military spending to improving pay and amenities to attract volunteers. The living conditions of Soviet soldiers under conscription are so bad that it is inconceivable large numbers of young men would choose such a life. Such a diversion of spending would further reduce the Soviet military threat, for in the absence of an offsetting increase in the defense budget, the Soviets would have less to spend on procuring and developing weapons. Any failure to divert spending in this manner could easily be detected.

Thus, the question regarding verification is not whether a violation could be detected but whether the West would have the courage to respond. This question, of course, applies to all arms control agreements. In other words, if we assume that the Soviets would violate a conscription ban because the West would not take responsive measures, then we must conclude that arms control as a whole, and not merely this proposal, is unworkable.

Little Danger of a "Breakout"

Second, could either side withdraw from a treaty banning conscription? More to the point, is a ban on conscription susceptible to "breakout"?

Every state reserves the right to renounce a treaty if it determines that such action is required by its supreme national interests. The proper question, therefore, is not whether a treaty binds a nation forever but whether it creates conditions that provide adequate warning of possible danger. A ban on conscription that included the dismantling of the Soviet bloc's programs of predraft training in schools and paramilitary organizations would serve this purpose. In such a situation either side could introduce conscription if it so desired, but the lag between its introduction and any significant increase in military capability would be so great that the other side would have more than enough time to take steps to safeguard its security.

Probable Allied Reactions

Third, how would the European members of NATO react to such a proposal? In the absence of conscription, could NATO field adequate conventional forces? Given that a ban on conscription, in order to be acceptable to the Soviet Union, almost certainly would have to include all the NATO members, the reaction of the European allies is crucial to the plan's success. The two countries of most concern here are France and West Germany, since Great Britain, like the United States, does not have conscription.

The French may already be moving to abandon conscription. According to a 1987 study of the French military, "the Socialists have admitted that conscription is totally obsolete," in large part because pay increases for conscripts have reduced the economic attractiveness of a conscript army. The main resistance to ending conscription comes from French officers, who see it as a link between the army and the nation as a whole.[30]

In West Germany's case, "the Bundeswehr is by no means convinced that it can obtain enough true volunteers to fill even its technical requirements in the absence of the pressures imposed by conscription, and consequently it can be expected to resist such a proposal.[31] Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that when West Germany joined NATO, "clear majorities opposed the draft." Although public attitudes toward conscription became more favorable over time, some observers attribute that development "more to deteriorating economic conditions and job prospects than to any fundamental changes in attitudes toward the military." [32]

Moreover, it is becoming increasingly questionable whether West Germany can meet its manpower requirements via conscription. To offset the decline in the draft-age cohort in the next decade, West Germany recently increased the term of service from 15 to 18 months. The result has been a sharp increase in the number of conscientious objectors, which was expected to rise more than 10 percent in 1988.[33] If this trend continues--and there is good reason to

believe it will because it merely represents an acceleration of a movement already under way before the length of service was increased--it is difficult to understand how West German authorities will find a politically acceptable way to meet their current manpower requirements.

West Germany's predicament calls for a fundamental change in thinking: if Bonn cannot meet the military requirements imposed by the current threat, it should find some way to reduce the threat. In other words, even if a ban on conscription were to result in smaller West German armed forces, it would also result in considerably smaller Warsaw Pact forces across the border. On balance, the reduced threat should more than compensate for any decline in the size of West German forces. After all, if any young man who wants to be a conscientious objector can become one, it becomes somewhat absurd to talk about a conscript army. The rise in the numbers of conscientious objectors signifies that the West German army is evolving, in effect, from a conscript force to a volunteer one. Instead of ignoring or disavowing this development, West Germany should be attempting to find ways to take advantage of it.

Furthermore, one cannot look at the West German situation exclusively from a military viewpoint. As noted above, the Soviet Union, through Gorbachev's peace offensive, is changing West German opinion regarding the nature of the Soviet threat. Unless NATO can place on the table a proposal responsive to Soviet acceptance of asymmetrical reductions, the political unity of the alliance could unravel, making considerations of the military balance academic. By proposing a ban on conscription, the NATO members would place the burden on the Soviet Union to reject this proposal, and thus appear as the major obstacle to reducing tensions in Europe. If, on the other hand, Moscow accepted the proposal, it would over time lose the ability to field a mass army against Western Europe.

Civilian Control of the Military

Finally, there is the question of "the man on horseback." That issue is most pertinent with respect to West Germany and the Soviet Union. Do we run the risk of creating another Prussian general staff in West Germany? Could a Soviet army composed solely of professionals raise a military threat to civilian rule, perhaps creating an even more aggressively expansionist Soviet state?

These are serious questions. During the formative years of the United States, the Founders recognized the danger that professional armies pose to representative government. In the words of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, "a well-regulated Militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free State; . . . Standing Armies, in time of peace, should be avoided as dangerous to liberty." Indeed, one of the arguments used by the Anti-Federalists against the Constitution concerned its acceptance of a professional standing army:

The evil to be feared from a large standing army in time of peace, does not arise solely from the apprehension, that the rulers may employ them for the purpose of promoting their own ambitious views, but that equal, and perhaps greater danger, is to be apprehended from their overturning the constitutional powers of the government, and assuming the power to dictate any form they please.[34]

These are wise words, and the Federalists addressed them. While noting that "the American militia . . . erected eternal monuments to their fame" in the revolutionary war, Alexander Hamilton added that "war, like most other things, is a science to be acquired and perfected by diligence, by perseverance, by time, and by practice." Hence, the militia could not substitute for a professional army without endangering the nation's security. The safety of the republic would have to rest on the subordination of the army to the people's elected representatives.

Independent of all other reasonings upon the subject, it is a full answer to those who require a more preemptory provision against military establishments in time of peace to say that the whole power of the proposed government is to be in the hands of the representatives of the people. This is the essential, and, after all, the only efficacious security for the rights and privileges of the people which is attainable in civil society.[35]

The solution to this problem, therefore, lies in the development of political institutions that diffuse power, in particular by subordinating the military unquestioningly to civilian rule, and a political culture that does not promote militaristic values. As S. E. Finer observes in his highly regarded book on the subject, "the most important factor" inhibiting military usurpation of political power "is the armed forces' acceptance of the principle of civil supremacy." [36]

Thus, although concerns about the possible emergence of another Prussian general staff are warranted, it must be recognized that West Germany today is not the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm, Hitler, or even Weimar. West Germany's democratic institutions are now respected and secure: indeed, according to military historian John Keegan, "the attempt to make the Bundeswehr a constitutional force must be judged an unqualified success." [37] Moreover, Keegan points out that conscription was one of the "principal instruments" underpinning the social position of the Prussian officer class: it "extended the officer's authority over the whole of German manhood in the most formative years of life. Exposure to military service taught the young German unquestioning acceptance of authority, routinized discipline, and fervent patriotism." [38] In short, it is historically inaccurate to argue that abandoning conscription risks the reemergence of a Prussian general staff.

The danger that a purely professional Soviet military establishment could pose a threat to civilian rule and thus to the stability of Europe also seems misplaced. One legacy of the Communist party's lengthy reign has been the firm subordination of the military to civilian control. That pattern is not likely to change even if the Soviet Union's political structure becomes more open and pluralistic.

It is significant in that context that Andrei Sakharov made an end to conscription part of his platform for election to the new Soviet legislature. [39] Sakharov's credentials as a critic of Soviet militarism are impeccable, and although he has supported Gorbachev, he has been vocal in his misgivings about the implications for democracy in some of Gorbachev's reforms. [40] It is difficult to imagine that someone as intelligent and knowledgeable as Sakharov would favor an end to conscription if such a step would threaten democracy in the Soviet Union instead of promoting it.

It should be remembered that in the first Russian state, Kievan Rus, "fighting-men were free to enter and leave the prince's service at will." [41] Conscription entered Russia at the time of the Mongol conquest, reflecting the values of that totalitarian and expansionist empire. According to Tibor Szamuely, the late Russian historian who described the factors shaping the modern-day Soviet Union in his book, *The Russian Tradition-*

The basic Mongol principles of unqualified submission to the State, and of the universal, compulsory and permanent state service of all individuals and classes of society, gradually permeated the Muscovite social structure. . . .

The Mongols bequeathed to Muscovy not only their conception of society and of the state, but also the system of government and administration that had served them so well, and that was so admirably fitted to the needs of a large, expanding, and powerful state. . . .

In military organization the Russians proved apt pupils . . . the system of a unified and centralized army based on universal conscription, the structure of the army, its strategy and tactics--all these were derived from the Mongols. [42]

As Szamuely notes, "the transformation of the Russian social structure into a system where all became compliant and powerless dependents of the State was consummated primarily through the organization of the nation's defense." [43] Thus, it is clear that compulsory universal military service has served throughout Russian history--not merely in the Soviet period--as an instrument of totalitarian rule. Indeed, recognition of this fact may help explain Gorbachev's new found interest in limiting conscription. He has expressed a desire to turn the Soviet Union into a law-governed society, one in which the leaders do not have absolute power but are subject, like all citizens, to the law. [44] Echoing the position of the Federalists, Shevardnadze has observed that in this new Soviet society "all departments concerned with military and military-industrial activity will be under the control of the supreme nationwide elected bodies." [45] Consequently, to break the totalitarian pattern of Russian history and to encourage the development of a value system in the Soviet Union in which the state serves the individual rather than the other way around, the institution of conscription must be abolished.

Conclusion: The Purpose of Arms Control

To date, arms control has been concerned with technical military criteria of strategic stability, that is, with structuring forces in order to reduce incentives for initiating hostilities in a crisis. This focus has reflected the limits of the dialogue between the two sides. However, although stability is a useful goal, it should not be the ultimate purpose of arms control.

Ideally, arms control works not merely by creating a standoff but by undermining the political causes that make nations adversaries. An excellent example of how this process should work is the development of relations between the United States and Canada. In the aftermath of the War of 1812 there was a danger of a naval arms race on the Great Lakes. To avert this development President James Madison proposed a formal limitation of naval forces. The ultimate result of the Rush-Bagot agreement was the longest undefended border in the world.

Why was this agreement so successful when other efforts at naval arms limitation in the 20th century proved such dismal failures? In the final analysis one has to conclude that the success of the Canadian-American relationship is a product of the heritage that both countries share. The two sides were transformed from military enemies into close friends because of the trust that arose from their common democratic values. The Rush-Bagot agreement, in other words, helped create the conditions in which the values that the United States and Canada (and, one might add, Great Britain) had in common could outweigh the issues that divided them. Conversely, it was the absence of such shared values that undermined the effectiveness of the naval arms agreements between the world wars.

Difficult as it may be to believe, the transformation taking place in the Soviet Union may indicate that Moscow is rejecting its totalitarian values in favor of Western views of democracy and human rights. For example, in discussing the Soviet proposal to develop a "common European home," Shevardnadze expressed an interest in a French suggestion "to consider the concept of a European community under law," which "presupposes a comparison of the legal practices of European states and the highlighting of common norms in defending human rights."^[46] Elaborating on this new Soviet acceptance of Western values, Shevardnadze declared in an extraordinary speech last October that "in the course of the processes of growing democratization and glasnost, pluralism of opinions and assessments, freedom to express disagreement, tolerance, and humanity are being asserted."^[47] These are astonishing words from a Soviet foreign minister, but if they sincerely reflect the values of the current Soviet leadership, then the ideological conflict that has been at the root of the Cold War and the arms race is easing dramatically. In other words, the U.S.-Canada disarmament model may have more relevance than anyone could have dared hope just a few short years ago.

It is not surprising that East-West arms control negotiations thus far have been consumed by technical details, given the difficulty of the issues and the suspicion that has existed between the two sides. Yet however necessary such a focus may be, obsession with military details to the exclusion of other considerations misapprehends the utility of arms control. In particular, such an obsession could result in a lack of imagination and perspective that would allow important opportunities for fundamental improvements to be missed.

The INF Precedent

An example of the potential for improved relations is the INF treaty. When President Reagan initially proposed the zero-option, it was widely regarded as an unrealistic objective. Newsweek, for example, wrote that the president had "made the Russians an initial offer they could not realistically be expected to accept."^[48] The London Economist concurred that "it seems unlikely that Russia will accept even the public part of Mr. Reagan's zero-option proposal" dealing with long-range INF, much less his private desire to eliminate short-range INF as well.^[49] Yet the very simplicity and boldness of his proposal set the agenda for the subsequent negotiation, and a new Soviet leadership ultimately embraced it, agreeing to eliminate both short- and long-range INF.

The success of the zero-option indicates the direction in which we should be going. Soviet spokesmen already have indicated to Western reporters that they are "quite prepared to consider the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in the course of a general process of European disarmament, with the clear implication that some Eastern European countries might subsequently take their own path in domestic politics."^[50] Indeed, in February 1987 Gorbachev called for "dismantling foreign bases and bringing the troops stationed there back home," adding pointedly that "we apply this to ourselves too."^[51] More recently, Shevardnadze reiterated this position, arguing that "the restriction of the military activities of all states to the territories within their national borders is in both the general and our own interest."^[52] Such hints need to be pursued seriously.

Benefits of a Mutual Conscription Ban

In formulating arms control proposals in this new environment, the United States should recognize that, as Gorbachev himself has observed, "Soviet foreign policy today is most intimately linked with perestroika, the domestic

restructuring of Soviet society." [53] Accordingly, the United States should design its arms control proposals with an eye toward helping to shape Soviet society in a way that would encourage the development of democratic values and weaken the grip of militarism and totalitarianism.

In this regard a ban on conscription would play a useful, and perhaps even indispensable, role. As noted, for centuries conscription has been used in Russia to inculcate a value system in which the individual is subordinated to the state. Such a value system is a spawning ground for a foreign policy based on suspicion, hostility, and aggression. After all, if a government views its own people as mere instruments of its power, how will it view foreigners? In such a situation, what can arms control accomplish?

A ban on conscription also would fit well with current arms control proposals. The West's position in the conventional stability talks is focused on reducing armored and artillery units, with the intent of minimizing the possibility of surprise attack. A ban on conscription would support this objective by effectively reducing force levels. Indeed, it is difficult to see how there could be deep cuts in Soviet forces otherwise. Moreover, a ban on conscription would further contribute to conventional stability by reducing the Soviet mobilization capability, since the most proficient Soviet reservists are conscripts with recent military service.

If there is no progress in the conventional stability talks, a ban on conscription could also stand by itself. Because military service in the Warsaw Pact countries is so unpopular, it is extremely unlikely that they will be able to maintain such large armed forces if conscription were to be ended. Consequently, a ban on conscription would result in a massive reduction in the size of their armies--in effect undermining the threat to the West.

If the elimination of conscription in one stroke proves too difficult to negotiate, or if there is concern about cheating, the scope of conscription could be reduced in stages--perhaps by a lottery, following the American precedent during the Nixon years. Given the asymmetries that exist between the two blocs on conscription, the initial reductions would have to be taken disproportionately by the Warsaw Pact, particularly by the Soviet Union. It is also worth noting that even equal percentage reductions would mean that far more Warsaw Pact forces, and especially Soviet forces, would be demobilized. If these initial steps are successfully completed, the process would be continued until conscription was eliminated.

Finally, a proposal to ban conscription would be a test of Gorbachev's purposes in restructuring Soviet society. Is he sincerely interested in repudiating Stalinism, or is he simply buying time in order to strengthen the Soviet Union for a future return to confrontation? The key question here is the role of military-patriotic education, which is the foundation of conscription in Soviet society. In his speech to the 27th party congress, Gorbachev stated that "we view the struggle against war and military preparations, and against the preaching of hatred and violence as an inseparable part of democratization of all international relations and genuine improvement of the world's political climate." [54] These are sentiments worth applauding, but they run contrary to the endorsements of military-patriotic education by his foreign minister and the program adopted at that very party congress.

Gorbachev should not be allowed to have it both ways. The Soviet government's willingness to dismantle the apparatus of conscription is a key test of its intentions toward other countries, and in particular toward its neighbors in Europe. The United States, by proposing the zero-option, has initiated a process that could lead to a fundamental change in the East-West relationship. It is time now to build boldly on that foundation. Just as the zero-option set the agenda for the INF talks, so a proposal to ban military conscription could determine the course of the conventional stability talks scheduled to begin later this year. Whatever Moscow's response, the democratic West has everything to gain and nothing to lose.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Perhaps the most extraordinary development in the Soviet Union in the past year has been the expressed desire on the part of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and other members of the Soviet leadership to transform the Soviet state from a government of men to a government of laws. Although some effort is being made to justify this fundamental change in terms of Leninism (see, for example, "Lenin, Socialism, Democracy," *International Affairs* [Moscow], July 1988, pp. 93-98), more honest Soviet spokesmen acknowledge their indebtedness to the West.

According to Fyodr Burlatsky: "It was probably wrong to have rejected the ideas of the great revolutionary democrats of the past on the separation of the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. . . . Russia . . . never had any liberal tradition--namely, of individual independence from state interference, or any concept of inalienable human rights." (Fyodr Burlatsky, "On Soviet Parliamentarianism," *Literaturnaya gazeta*, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service; Daily Report; Soviet Union [hereafter cited as FBIS:SOV], June 16, 1988, p. 48.)

[2] Michael R. Gordon, "Soviet Assails U.S. Plan on Conventional Arms," *New York Times*, December 8, 1987, p. A14.

[3] Paul Lewis, "Soviet Offers to Adjust Imbalance of Conventional Forces in Europe," *New York Times*, June 24, 1988, p. A1.

[4] Gordon, p. A14.

[5] Thomas F. O'Boyle, "Gorbachev Sways German Missile Town," *Wall Street Journal*, January 7, 1988, p. 16.

[6] Gilbert A. Lewthwaite, "Gorbachev Tops Reagan in British Poll on Missiles," *Baltimore Sun*, November 7, 1987, p. 2.

[7] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1988-1989* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1988).

[8] *Ibid.* It should be noted, however, that many of these reserves are not in position to reinforce front lines. For example, Spain has the largest reserves, with over 1 million men with military service in the prior five years.

[9] A. A. Yepishev, *Some Aspects of Party-Political Work in the Soviet Armed Forces* (Moscow: Progress, 1975), pp. 25- 26. Emphasis in original.

[10] L. Balyasnaya, "Improve the Military-Patriotic Education of Students," *Vospitaniye shkolnikov* [Education of Schoolchildren], no. 6 (1971), in Joint Publications Research Service, 54841, January 3, 1972, p. 47.

[11] Marshal A. I. Pokryshkin, *Krasnoznamennoye oboronnoye* [Red Banner Defense (Society)] (Moscow: DOSAAF, 1975), p. 219.

[12] L. A. Bublik, *Voyenno-partrioticheskoye vospitaniye sovetskoi molodezhi--na uroven trebovaniy KPSS* [Military-Patriotic Education of Soviet Youth at the Level of CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) Requirements] (Moscow: DOSAAF, 1977), pp. 65-66.

[13] *Krasnaya zvezda* [Red Star], May 29, 1984, in FBIS:SOV, May 30, 1984, p. R2.

[14] *Zarya vostoka* [Dawn of the East], July 7, 1985, cited in FBIS:SOV, July 24, 1985, p. R7.

[15] *Pravda*, March 7, 1986, in FBIS:SOV, March 10, 1986, p. 014.

[16] D. Zlatopolskiy, "The State and the Individual," *Pravda*, February 14, 1986, in FBIS:SOV, February 24, 1986, p. R6.

[17] See, for example, the letter from Lieutenant Colonel Z. Vichis, "There Will Not Be Another," *Komosomolskaya pravda*, October 10, 1986, in JPRS-UMA-86-069, December 17, 1986, pp. 7-9.

[18] V. Yevseyev and P. Studenikin, "Man's Work--That Is What Service in the USSR Armed Forces Is Called," *Pravda*, May 18, 1987, in FBIS:SOV, June 9, 1987, p. V3.

[19] Jackson Diehl, "Poland Bows to Dissent, Proposes Alternative to Military Service," *Washington Post*, January 20, 1988, p. A17.

- [20] Michael Dobbs, "Peace Groups Gaining Influence in East Bloc," *Washington Post*, July 25, 1988, p. A14.
- [21] John Tagliabue, "East Germany Faces Unrest Among Youth," *New York Times*, February 4, 1988, p. A9.
- [22] *Pravda*, November 1, 1988, in *FBIS:SOV*, November 2, 1988, p. 43.
- [23] Stanislav Kondrashov, "Impressions and Reflections After a Trip," *Izvestia*, April 2, 1988, in *Current Digest of Soviet Press* (hereafter cited as *CDSP*), May 4, 1988, p. 11.
- [24] Vyacheslav Dashichev, "The Search for New East-West Relations," *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 18, 1988, in *CDSP*, July 13, 1988, pp. 4-5.
- [25] Interview in *Al-Musawwar* (Cairo), June 3, 1988, in *FBIS:SOV*, June 10, 1988, p. 26.
- [26] 19th All-Union Conference of the CPSU: Documents and Materials (Moscow: Novosti, 1988), p. 9.
- [27] Bill Keller, "Gorbachev Assails Economic Skeptics," *Washington Post*, January 8, 1989, p. 9.
- [28] Quoted in I. Sas, "Restructuring Demands Action. Meeting of the USSR Armed Forces General Staff Party Aktiv," *Krasnaya zvezda*, August 13, 1988, in *FBIS:SOV*, August 15, 1988, p. 72.
- [29] Victor Karpov, "A Soviet Agenda for 1989: The Official View," *Washington Post*, January 24, 1989, p. A23.
- [30] Douglas Porch, "French Defense and the Gaullist Legacy," in *The Defense of Western Europe*, ed. L. H. Gann (Dover, Mass.: Auburn House Publishing Company, 1987), 199.
- [31] Dennis E. Showalter, "The Bundeswehr of the Federal Republic of Germany," in Gann, p. 232.
- [32] David Capitanichik and Richard C. Eichenberg, *Defense and Public Opinion* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 58. On initial West German attitudes toward conscription, also see John A. Reed, Jr., *Germany and NATO* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1987), pp. 60-67.
- [33] Robert J. McCartney, "W. German Conscientious Objectors Now Legion," *Washington Post*, October 11, 1988, p. A12.
- [34] "Brutus," January 24, 1788, in *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates*, ed. Ralph Ketcham (New York: New American Library, 1986), p. 289.
- [35] *The Federalist Papers* (New York: New American Library, 1961), pp. 166, 179-80.
- [36] S. E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Penguin, 1975), p. 28.
- [37] John Keegan, "Western Europe and Its Armies, 1945-85," in Gann, p. 13.
- [38] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- [39] Peter Gumbel, "Sakharov Is Nominated as Democracy Hits the Streets in Moscow," *Wall Street Journal*, January 23, 1989, p. A10.
- [40] See, for example, "On Gorbachev: A Talk with Andrei Sakharov," *New York Review of Books*, December 22, 1988, p. 28.
- [41] Tibor Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 13.
- [42] *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

[43] Ibid., p. 37.

[44] "Consistent democratic change in the Soviet community will crown the formation of the law-based socialist state as a form of organization and workings of political rule which fully corresponds to socialism and socialist democracy. Legality, supreme and triumphant, which expresses the people's will, is the pivot of such a state. State and Party bodies, mass organizations, work collectives, and all officials and private persons shall proceed from strictly observed legality in all their actions." Theses of the CPSU Central Committee for the 19th All-Union Party Conference (Moscow: Novosti, 1988), p. 24.

[45] Pravda, July 26, 1988, in FBIS:SOV, July 26, 1988, p. 30.

[46] Moscow Television, October 12, 1988, in FBIS:SOV, October 13, 1988, p. 37.

[47] "Establishing the Ideals of Peace in People's Minds," Pravda, October 13, 1988, in FBIS:SOV, October 13, 1988, p. 29.

[48] "Reagan's Peace Offensive," Newsweek, November 30, 1981, p. 31.

[49] "Degrees of zero," Economist, November 21, 1981, p. 26.

[50] Gwynne Dyer, "New Thinking on Disarmament," Baltimore Sun, June 19, 1987, p. 17A.

[51] Moscow Television Service, February 16, 1987, in FBIS:SOV, February 17, 1987, p. 24.

[52] Reported in Die Welt (Hamburg), October 21, 1988, in
FBIS: SOV, October 24, 1988, p. 2.

[53] New York Times, December 9, 1987, p. A20.

[54] Moscow Television, March 6, 1986, in FBIS:SOV, March 6, 1986, p. 15.