

The cutter then takes care to cut the pieces as equally as is possible. The other tries to detect any difference to gain advantage.

The cake-sharing theory of slow multilateral nuclear disarmament works along similar lines. Each side makes an inventory of its nuclear arms and calls the total 100%. A proportion of this sum is assigned to each warhead and the value of each warhead is called the military value percentage: say, 0.04% for a cruise missile. Each side then sends their list to the other and invites them to choose 1% of the total for the first round of disarmament. At the end of the first year, say, each side will have 99% left. The following things might well result:

1. There will be no increase in the perceived threat from the other side as 99% of weapons are just as deterring as 100%.
2. Despite the very small change there would be a huge psychological shift as the world would now be one that was disarming, but still deterring.
3. Unlike the result of all other disarmament schemes the perceptions of change would lead to increased confidence instead of increased insecurity.

The last of these results because the side that drew up the list assigned military value percentages to weapons in the exact proportion to their ability to offer security. The other side will pick the 1% that they perceive to be the most dangerous and they will thus feel that they have got more than 1% in their slice. Thus at the end of the first round each side feels more safe and deterrence still operates. In this scheme things move very slowly. Either side can call a halt at any time if it felt it was being cheated. But cheating would have disadvantages. In the first stages cheating would have very little benefit—the odd one or two percentage points—but the loss in terms of international loss of face would be great. Also the cheater who did not disarm risks new methods of verification finding him out.

The other method of cheating would be to assign false values to the initial military value percentage list. This could be used to over-value a system that one side particularly wanted to keep. The cost is, of course, that something else must be undervalued and the cheater risks offering this bargain to the other side.

The slowness with which Salter's method would proceed is its greatest strength. As long as the risks of horizontal proliferation, imperfect verification, prefabricated missiles (which, disassembled might be deemed not to count as part of the list), plutonium stockpiles and the knowledge to make nuclear weapons exist then a 'nuclear-free' world will be a more dangerous place than it is at present. But these problems would be many rounds away in the Salter scheme and there is no reason why a start could not be made soon. The wisdom of deterrence would continue to operate within the lifetimes of most of us. If the above problems were not solved by the time the numbers of warheads were getting to a critically low level then deterrence could be left to operate at this new low level, preserving the safety of the planet as it has done for the last four decades.

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