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# Matter of Fact . . . . . By Joseph Alsop

## On Nullifying Proliferation

THERE IS a great, great deal more to the argument about the anti-missile missile than the difference on this subject between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.



Alsop

The Joint Chiefs say that the Soviets are undoubtedly deploying a nationwide anti-missile system, and therefore we must respond with nationwide deployment of our Nike-X system. Secretary McNamara says that a Nike-X system will be terribly costly, and will not be "cost-effective" — thereby slighting all the vital political-psychological factors which he is also known to have slighted at the time of the Cuban missile crisis.

But these points, though highly important, are no more than the bare beginning of the problem. We have repeatedly told the Soviets, "We won't deploy anti-missile missiles if you don't," yet with their badly strained budget and pressing domestic needs, the Soviets are footing the enormous bill for deployment. One suspects they have seen the biggest point of all more clearly than the Joint Chiefs and Secretary McNamara.

The biggest point of all is that Soviet and American anti-missile missile net-deployment of effective anti-missile missile networks amounts to a device for restoring the world power balance that existed before nuclear proliferation began.

Take the case, for instance, of Gen. de Gaulle and his "Force de Frappe."

Unless de Gaulle in fact intends to use his nuclear weapons against Germany

or his other European neighbors (in which case we might have something to say), these costly weapons have always been a dubious investment.

Even before the Soviets began to deploy anti-missile missiles, there was always a grave question whether the "Force de Frappe" had enough real penetrating and striking power to have the smallest influence on Soviet policy.

NOW, HOWEVER, the Gaullist "Force de Frappe" is about to be rendered irretrievably obsolete before it has even been completed. For de Gaulle cannot respond to the construction of the Soviet anti-missile missile net by building enough additional French missiles to saturate and overwhelm the Soviet defensive system.

The program of his "Force de Frappe" was limited from the outset, both by economics and by war-heads. And now that the Soviets are installing a vast defensive system, quite capable of knocking down anything that de Gaulle can send against them, the "Force de Frappe" must automatically cease to be a serious factor in the power balance.

The same reasoning of course applies, not only to the rather half-hearted British nuclear deterrent, but also and above all to the new nuclear power of Communist China. Furthermore, no other nation-state now in business, except the United States and the U.S.S.R., can conceivably pay the bill, either now or for many years to come, for an anti-missile missile system of its own.

The cost to this country is estimated at above \$30 billion, and in addition to the absolutely forbidding expense, there is the further fact that neither China, nor France, nor any other state except the United States

and the U.S.S.R. has anything like the advanced technology to do the job.

Silly people say we must not build an anti-missile system to "avoid proliferation." But in fact, this turns out to be the first practical way of nullifying proliferation that has yet been thought of. For in the new era that clearly lies ahead (unless the Soviets yield to last minute American pleas to turn back), there are going to be two very different kinds of nuclear powers.

THERE ARE going to be the nuclear powers that really count, because they have both missiles and anti-missile missiles, and the nuclear powers that do not count, because they lack the defensive system. The kind of nuclear power possessed by France and China will thus be fatally downgraded.

This is of crucial importance, because the real danger of proliferation lies in probability theory. If there is one chance in ten of a nuclear war when only two nation-states possess nuclear power, then there is nearly one chance in two of such a war when the number of states possessing nuclear power has risen to six. But you just about go back to **only one chance in ten**, if a way is found, as it has now been found, to make the two original nuclear powers the only ones that count.

It has been uncomfortable, God knows, and it will always be uncomfortable, to have the world's future depend on the quasi-monopoly of nuclear power enjoyed by the United States and the Soviet Union. But that kind of bipolar monopoly is at least very much more comfortable than a multipolar system. And now a way to avoid that nightmare has rather strangely turned up, in the curious disguise of the anti-missile missile.

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