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Question & Answer Session: U.S. Military Strategy and Nuclear Disarmament

April 26, 2000

Arjun Makhijani: Let me ask a question about NATO to both of you. This is a speculation on my part that the U.S. policy on NATO expansion and subsequent use of NATO out-of-area seems designed to prevent an independent military capability in Europe and to keep a high level of antagonism between NATO and Russia in order to maintain superiority and dominance over all potential first-stage rivals. You didn't mention Europe as a possible rival but I think the Pentagon thinks about Europe as a possible rival if it becomes independent of NATO and the United States. I'd like some comment about potential U.S.-NATO strategy in light of the goal that you say the U.S. has to prevent potential rivals from emerging.

Michael Klare: I really don't think people in the Pentagon think about Europe as a rival. The U.S. is up here on the highest peak, Mt. Everest, looking down. I think you have to think that's the way they think. The U.S. does not have the forces to control all the subsidiary peaks. It can't police the whole world, so it needs strategic partnerships with others to maintain these regions. I think Europe is just looked down on, not across. That's the rhetoric - that the U.S. and Europe are partners. That's not the way Washington thinks. NATO is a convenient instrument for stability in this area. Over here is Israel. Over there is Japan. And then maybe others to maintain order here. And I think Kosovo was seen as the test of this strategic plan to use these regional partners to maintain order in that region, and to demonstrate that we can do it.

Question: You raise provocative points that in my mind are interconnected. My organization was one of the first groups in the country to draw attention to U.S. plans to compensate for underground nuclear testing through what is now called the Stockpile Stewardship Program, which is really a massive reinvestment and rebuilding of the nuclear weapons infrastructure. I became aware of it right after coming back from Kazakhstan in 1990. Putting together this information in 1993, we were literally censored by many of the U.S. arms control groups in Washington, D.C. who were concerned that by raising these questions we would damage the prospect for Senate ratification of CTB some time in the future. We made a deal that was later formalized but was not yet in place, and we thought we had a chance to really challenge the fundamental concept. If we were going to go for a CTB treaty we should go for it as NGOs in the spirit of it as a disarmament measure, which is what it was historically intended to be. As I said,

this discussion was literally cut and not allowed in. We ended up with the current situation.

Meanwhile, this whole thing has been locked in there for \$4.5 billion-a-year program. The technologies that are being developed have applications for all these new kinds of high-tech weaponry that you discussed. There are direct technological connections with Ballistic Missile Defense programs. When I brought this document to the attention of the ballistic missile defense experts at this conference, they were all completely surprised and had never seen this before. And yet all of this technology development, much of it under the guidance of Stockpile Stewardship, is exactly what is needed to carry out the global dominance model that you just described. It's not going to happen without hardware to produce the weapons. So what we see now, I think, is that the failure of the NGOs to put pressure on the Senate was in part because the NGOs were not appealed to as disarmament experts. According to the polls, most Americans support elimination of nuclear weapons, support the CTBT. The CTBT was presented to the American people by the NGOs as a way to lock in technological superiority essentially. So I wonder if you could comment on all of this.

Michael Klare: I think what you say is consistent with what I've laid out.

Vladimir Iakimets: Let me add to what was said by just talking about the education of Senators. Yesterday, I got this point very clearly from the speech delivered by Chris Payne. Answering my question, he confirmed my guess that the failure of the CTBT ratification was partially due to improper NGO lobbying activities. I definitely know that this is also the story for Russia. I would even say that, in your case, your Senate and House of Representatives are quite professional and possess the opportunity to get information from their library immediately as well as from their well educated staff. In our case, Parliamentarians themselves are not educated and, therefore, if they have pressure from the administration, which is pushing some legislation, our deputies as usually compromise. The two ratification processes [START II and CTBT] behind closed doors, as well as the election process of the Russian Duma, showed clearly how the Kremlin administration is pressing them.

It seems to me that the most important point now is to try to create an independent watchdog group of well-educated experts to work closely with Parliamentarians in Russia. In your case, you already have organizations, like IEER. What they are doing is very important not only here in States, but we are also spreading their information on nuclear issues in Russia. We are now translating this information into Russian to explain to those concerned what is National Missile Defense and how it relates to the ABM treaty. It seems to me that the NGO community is very important for mutually-supported activities related to the education of Senators. Establishing close contact with the scientists and nuclear designers is also important, because some of the Parliamentarians will never believe you if you have no support from the scientists who know what nuclear weapons mean, or what space-based lasers mean. If you talk and make mistake, one minor mistake, then the whole campaign will be destroyed.

Michael Klare: I think we have to think about a world in which American power will be dominate for a long time. I think the crucial psychological word is arrogance. I mean the arrogance of the white man's burden because I think there is an implicit racial, not to mention gender, element in all of this that really is - in my mind - the decisive one. I took the subway this

morning in Manhattan - and I grew up in New York City - you take the subway and you think you're in a very multicultural, diverse universe here in New York City. You go to a meeting of the Air Force and their strategic advisors and all you see is white men except for a few token non-white males in the room and it's a very different universe. I do think that implicit in all of this is just incredible arrogance and it is this arrogance that is the most destructive element because other people are not going to stand for it and it's going to create opposition. I think it's going to produce opposition from people who would rather be our friends than our enemies. In India, for example, this kind of American arrogance is so obnoxious and racist (they would use that word) that it's going to push them to go more in the direction of opposition than would otherwise be the case. So it's the arrogance that I would emphasize.

Vladimir Lakimets: I'd like to add one dimension to this discussion. It seems to me that what is behind this dominance and seeking superiority is that to be superior, to dominate over somebody, you should hate those you would like dominate over. In the case of the United States, since the Second World War, their adversary was the Soviet Union. Now it has disappeared. They are trying to extend this dominance strategy by creating a new adversary. Thus the "rogue state" concept emerged.

Michael Klare: I would like to add to Vladimir's comments about conventional weapons and the revolution in military affairs and bridging the gap with nuclear weapons. It's not the weapons that are bridging the gap, it's the targets. Because what the U.S. has done in Iraq and Kosovo and Serbia is to attack targets like electrical generation systems with a very precise weapon and very small amount of explosive. But if you destroy electricity generators, then the hospitals fail and all kinds of infrastructure fail and people suffer, and even die, because of lack of electricity. So it's the targeting of the economic infrastructure. Iraq was a modern state. When they destroyed the electric power system, the ability of the nation to take care of its people collapsed with it. It wasn't the weapon itself, it was the precise targeting of these crucial infrastructure elements.

Vladimir Lakimets: I have the list of emerging military technologies. You can find it in many publications. Some examples are hypersonic air-to-ground missiles for more effective attack mobile targets and deep underground facilities, long endurance weaponized aerial vehicles, broad area conventional electromagnetic pulse, and high-power microwave. These are already available in the U.S. and some were used in the Persian Gulf War.

Arjun Makhijani: One thing that is very important to understand about this precision weapon is that the targeting is precise when it works - and it works a lot of the time, so I think we should attend to that, not just focus on when it doesn't work - but the destruction is pretty indiscriminate. During the NATO-Yugoslavia war, the electrical transformers were targeted, not just the power plants. This was a new thing, as a major targeting strategy. Many of these electrical transformers contain PCBs. A great deal of the area is now highly contaminated with PCBs. One of our newsletters contains lists of highly toxic chemicals that were released. We have checked the chemicals that were in these transformers to the extent possible, and verified it from commercial information. Also, nuclear power plants were put at risk during the targeting of the chemical complex in Pancevo by the release of chemicals and oil, which was upstream from the cooling water intakes for Bulgarian nuclear power plants. So I would keep in mind that at the receiving end, these are not precise weapons. These are weapons of highly indiscriminate destruction of

the civilian population. We are now headed to an age when, in the name of precision weapons, we will have even more suffering on the part of the civilian population.

Vladimir Iakimets: As I already mentioned, there are several simulations made by the military experts in Russia of what would happen, what should be done, in order to keep retaliation opportunity for Russia under the first variant of the national missile defense system. I am talking about Russia because my country (as in UK, France and China) possesses delivery vehicles able to reach U.S. territory. Thus, it could be categorized as the only rogue states which may threaten (I hope it will never happen) the U.S. The results of this simulation mean that, if the U.S. deployed 200 interceptors, according to this first variant, these 200 will be enough to destroy 100 Russian warheads. Then, for Russia to have the opportunity to retaliate after a first-strike from the U.S., Russia would deploy 500 additional nuclear warheads. This is a new arms race, isn't it? I completely agree with you - this is globalization.

Question: To Michael. I'm wondering if we can access by the internet what you quoted from the Pentagon?

Michael Klare: Yes.

Question: Any reference to UN peacekeeping, peace enforcement, any mention of the U.S. doing it unilaterally, but doing it only under UN auspices. A question for Vladimir. I would like him to say whatever he can about what Ivanov talked about yesterday. Instead of Ballistic Missile Defense, how can you control missiles? It seems to me that this is the direction we should be going. How do you control or get rid of missiles, rather than defend against them?

Michael Klare: The Department of Defense annual report and all Department of Defense documents are available online at <www.defenselink.mil>. When you go to that site, you can see that the Defense Budget is one of the first choices. An incredible amount of material is available at that site. It's customary for us to look down on George Bush Senior, but read his speeches at the end of the Cold War, after the Persian Gulf conflict when he talked about the New World Order, which everybody ridiculed. Go back and look at those speeches. They were really quite decent in the sense that he did talk about cooperation with the UN, strengthening UN peacekeeping, collective UN activities. That is gone under Clinton. Clinton has moved from a multilateral approach to unilateralism and that is the dominant theme in everything that I was saying. American supremacy and unilateralism. The UN is gone from the equation.

Vladimir Iakimets: Today, in the *New York Times*, there are estimates of the possible cost for deployment, \$60 billion. However, very easy, very simple and very effective countermeasures are already available. Even if the U.S. had this deployment system, the missile will reach the territory. You are asking me about Ivanov's statement here at the UN. He said that the ABM treaty is the cornerstone for international security and stability and, if you destroy this, then you will have a new arms race. Ratify START II and do the negotiations on START III. The next step is to involve the other three nuclear countries into the negotiations. And the second point is to negotiate, reduce the number and negotiate to reduce more. The second point is to strengthen as much as possible the export control regime of the missile technologies.

Arjun Makhijani: I believe what happened with the CTBT was a kind of gun-culture, High Noon - what Michael is describing - that we will shoot everybody down and we're the good guys and demonstration of U.S. morality is not required. I have suggested that we have a criteria for what is a rogue nation and then we see who fits. But I think counter to that, there is a very strong cultural element in the United States that its inspiration is the Rule of Law and that the U.S. has given the world the idea of equality before the law. I think that a cultural education of the public, both coming from abroad, as it did too late during the CTBT debate, but more consistently from abroad and from within, is very necessary and may be more necessary than any specific issue. Without respect for commitments, there can be no progress, even when you have treaties. That's why my own position on nuclear weapons convention and so on is that the U.S. is disrespecting international commitments and we have make existing commitments stick in some way.

Question: In a funny way, the U.S. already has a commitment to international law within the United States. The U.S. is very big (geographically, ethnically, culturally), so it is already tied together by a system of law. What we have to be thinking about is how to get the United States again thinking about the world in the same way, with same commitment that we applaud within this country.

There is quite a bit of interest among NGOs about military domination based on space-based weapons. Could you elaborate on what you see as the viability of that from the point of view of the U.S. military, and over what timeframe? Both China and Russia have referred, at least unofficially, to the possibility of response to U.S. military power. You said in your speech that if the U.S. is committed to the idea of military domination, it is going to generate responses. If you could elaborate please?

Michael Klare: Those are interesting questions. I'm not a space weapons expert so I can't tell you the specific technical issues that you might raise. Just two points. First, they intend to spend a lot of money on this. So at this point, it is a money spending program that they have in mind, which is going to go forward no matter what. I just can't tell you, when you spend that kind of money, where it might lead if you are talking hundreds of billions of dollars over 20 years and they're thinking 10, 20, 50, 100 years into the future. And they are going to spend a lot of money on it. Second, what they say very clearly is that, in a lot of these areas, commercial space development is proceeding more rapidly than military space development and they intend to exploit the commercial sector. We used to think of spin-off from military to the commercial sector. Now they say it could be the other way around. There is worry that this new Sony Playstation is so sophisticated that you could use it to power a ballistic missile weapons system. They have techno-optimism, that's what I'm saying, and they are going to spend money. I can't comment on whether it will work or not.

As for your second question, the Defense Department annual report is full of discussion of asymmetric threats. They are very aware of it. What they worry about is nuclear, biological, chemical terrorism. Even if they can make this perfect space umbrella, the unknown terrorist is going to dock a ship in New York harbor and detonate a nuclear explosion. Or in a subway. They see terrorism as a real threat and that we have to spend billions and billions of dollars to defend against these estimated threats. What that essentially is going to call for is very intrusive surveillance into the lives of ordinary people on a very large scale. Every communication will be

electronically registered and followed, and there will be closed-circuit TV everywhere. The only response to this threat is intensive, intrusive surveillance of everyone's lives. So a certain kind of privacy and civil liberties that we have come to take for granted will disappear and I don't see anybody talking about this. But they are really serious about it.

Vladimir Iakimets: I will just touch on the combat laser. As far as I know, the Pentagon has a plan to test the combat laser in 2012 and then to deploy about 20-30 of these lasers into space in 2020. This means that the ABM treaty, which has been slowly eroding since 1997, will die. Something will happen soon because there is discrepancy between Ivanov's statement made here at the UN and what we read today in the *Washington Post* about what he said at the White House. If these plans are implemented on testing, then it means final farewell for the ABM treaty. What does this laser mean? This is nothing more than a nuclear warhead with some lasers on it, as far as I know. Nuclear energy is the only source of energy for this laser in space.

Hisham Zerrifi: A couple comments on the Sony Playstation and its ability for ballistic missile defenses. There's only been one news article about it, but essentially my understanding from that article is that what you have in these Sony Playstations is a very precise computer chip that is designed specifically for the graphics presentation of these video games. High resolution graphics that are better than anything else you have currently on the market. The basic idea is to be able to take that machine and integrate it into a missile system, which need the very high resolution graphics for very precise targeting. The Japanese government's response to this was to put export controls on the new Sony Playstation machine. But the export controls don't kick in until you reach a certain level, which means you can still buy individual Sony Playstations in Tokyo and then get on a plane and go where you want in the world with your Sony Playstation machine. Not best method of having export controls if this is what you are concerned about. But they have actually put in export controls according to news reports.