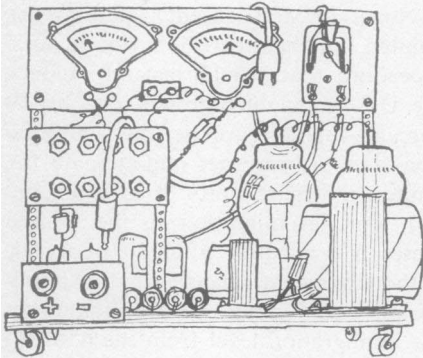


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Strategic Postures

In "Strategic arms talks: What is negotiable?" (27 Mar., p. 1707), Andrew Hamilton mentioned the three negotiating strategies discussed by President Nixon in his foreign policy message on 18 February. Hamilton correctly identified the third as reducing offensive forces, but he added: "It is notable that the President did not mention restrictions on defensive weapons such as the ABM in the third approach. One school of strategists, led by Herman Kahn and Donald Brennan of the Hudson Institute, has for several years advocated a 'defense race' as a more stable form of competition than an offense race."

It is correct that I have been advocating a substantial shift in emphasis to defense, as opposed to offense. . . . But, in associating my views with the President's third strategy, I believe Hamilton read into the strategy an association that was not intended. In the President's message, after he listed the three categories of negotiations (the "strategies"), the paragraph immediately following the third reads: "Each of these options was analyzed in relation to various levels of strategic defensive missiles, ABM's." It is quite clear that this was intended to apply to the third strategy no less than the other two.

I have favored shifting emphasis from offense to defense not so much because it would provide "a more stable form of arms competition than an offense race," indeed there are few senses in which a "more stable" situation would be a likely outcome, but first and foremost because it could save enormous numbers of lives, and save important resources to support the survivors, in the event a war actually occurred. [There are other important reasons as well (1).] I am quite willing that a suitable shift in emphasis should reduce Russian lives at risk no less than American, and I do not intrinsically favor a "defense race" to bring this about.

There has been a major revolution in the technology of active defense in the past 6 or 7 years, and this makes it possible to favor live Americans in preference to dead Russians in the procurement of our strategic forces and in our arms-control objectives. We should encourage the Soviets to exercise a similar preference—which they should find natural—for live Russians in preference to dead Americans. These preferences would be ill served by limiting defenses to very low levels, or zero, although an

all-out defense race is not needed either. What is needed is a ceiling on offensive forces, or better yet, substantial reductions in offensive forces, coupled with the deployment of significant defenses. In general terms, at least, a posture of this type could be developed within any one of the three general categories mentioned in the President's message. Whether it will be, of course, remains to be seen.

D. G. BRENNAN

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References

1. D. G. Brennan, in *Why ABM?*, J. J. Holst and W. Schneider, Jr., Eds. (Pergamon, Elmsford, N.Y., 1969); ———, in *Safeguard: Why the ABM Makes Sense*, W. R. Kintner, Ed. (Hawthorn Books, New York, 1969).

Society of Ciphers

Joseph V. Smith is worried regarding the invasion of his privacy by the use of his social security number (Letters, 13 Mar.). I suggest that he relax since the privacy of an individual to all intents and purposes ceased with the passage of the Federal Income Tax Amendment in 1913. . . .

WILLIAM H. BELL

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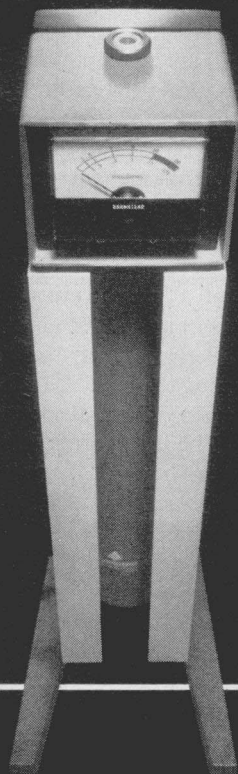
In looking through my billfold, I find the following frequently used identification cards, each of which bears a different number: eight credit cards of various kinds, driver's license, firearm owner's registration, private pilot's license, and two insurance company identification cards. In addition, there are at least a dozen other identity numbers which I use on rarer occasions.

The reason for these numbers is the ambiguity of one's name. If we had a system of naming people which would insure no duplication, we would need no numbers, although for data processing purposes the numbers are undoubtedly more convenient. Surely no one would object to having a unique name. Why then an objection to a unique number? Assuming that a unique number is desirable, why not then have only one per person, rather than dozens? The social security number is unique and serves well for identification. The sooner we can persuade our licensing and accrediting agencies to adopt the one number, the more convenient it will be for the individual.

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