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WHAT'S LEFT OF SALT?

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The signing of the treaty on "Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems" and the "Interim Agreement of Certain Measures with Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms" were proclaimed as historic events in every sense of the word. A White House statement referring to the 26 May 1972 Nixon-Brezhnev summit accords hailed the signing as "the first time that two major powers have achieved this kind of understanding affecting their vital security." The real significance of the two agreements, however, is the claim that they "enhanced the security of both sides."[1] If, in fact, one is to deal critically with the latter statement, the strategic national security objectives of both the United States and the U.S.S.R. should be tested against the terms of the agreements, then against the strategic balance as it has developed today.

In the broadest of terms, any effective strategic arms control measures must reduce the likelihood of nuclear war, as well as reduce one's own damage if war should occur. The point is, arms control must contribute to national security defense policy or it does not make sense at all. That is, it must enhance nuclear deterrence, provide damage-limitation, and enhance crisis stability—preclude a "first-strike bonus." More specifically, the U.S. strategic policy has been widely publicized and clearly stated over recent years. President Nixon has said, "deterrence of war is the primary goal of our strategic policy and the principal function of our nuclear forces."[2] Thus, our strategic objectives continue to be:

- to deter all-out attack on the United States or its allies;
- to face any potential aggressor contemplating less than all-out attack with unacceptable risks; and
- to maintain a stable political environment within which the threat of aggression or coercion against the United States or its allies is minimized.[3]

U.S. strategic objectives, then, encompass deterrence, assured destruc-

tion, and crisis stability; they are basically defensive, slight damage-limitation, and reject a first-strike option. On the other hand, the strategic objectives of the U.S.S.R. are not presented nearly so neatly to us by the Soviet leadership; however, throughout the years there has been a consistency in statements and remarks by senior Soviet military officers and party leaders that provide a base from which a set of strategic objectives may be derived.

As early as 1962, Soviet Marshal V.D. Sokolovskii, in the first edition of his book *Military Strategy*, revealed that "the basic method of waging the war will be by massive missile blows to destroy the aggressor's instruments for nuclear attack and . . . to attain victory within the shortest possible time."[4] In the same year, Marshal Malinovskii, writing in *Kommunist*, seemed to imply the possibility of frustrating "the opponent's aggressive intentions" without initiating war. In other words, Malinovskii sought to deter an attack by maintaining such a strong military force that the question of an opponent's victory would be unsure. Additionally, Malinovskii revealed a war-winning strategy when he wrote, "if war should become a fact," we will decisively "destroy the aggressor."[5] And in 1969 Marshal N.I. Krylov, Chief of the Strategic Missile Forces, reiterated a war-fighting, war-winning strategy. He noted,

> the imperialist ideologists are trying to lull the vigilance of the world's peoples by having recourse to propaganda devices to the effect that there will be no victors in a future nuclear war. . . . Victory in war, if the imperialists succeed in starting it, will be on the side of world socialism and all progressive mankind.[6]

Three years later, in 1972, an article in *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil* emphasized that

> In the current phase, the Armed Forces should be capable of stopping a surprise attack by the aggressor in any situation and use rapid, crushing blows to destroy his main nuclear missile weapons and troop formations, thus securing favorable conditions for further conduct of and victorious conclusion to the war.[7]

Soviet military doctrine, then, asserts that should the Soviet Union be threatened with war, it would initiate a preemptive attack which would seek to destroy the enemy's nuclear weapons forces before they are launched against the U.S.S.R.[8]

As a distinction to the defensive U.S. strategic objectives of deterrence, assured destruction, and crisis stability, the U.S.S.R. has a fundamental uncertainty as to who will initiate a first strike but, nevertheless, looks forward to victory if nuclear war should occur. From an assessment of Soviet literature, three strategic objectives are apparent:

- to deter an attack by being able to retaliate under any circumstances.
- to frustrate (preempt) any surprise attack by an enemy; and
- to win any nuclear war that may occur.

In summary, the Soviet objectives might be stated simply as nuclear deterrence, a counterforce damage-limiting capability, and an overall war-winning strategy.

Arms Agreements and the Strategic Balance. In brief, the terms of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty limit each party to 100 ABM's at each of two sites, one protecting the national capital and the other protecting part of the nation's offensive strategic forces. When the treaty was signed, the U.S.S.R. had an operational ABM system defending the Moscow area that consisted of some 64 launchers with supporting radars and command and control equipment. On the other hand, the United States had

planned to deploy some 200 ABM's to protect its Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) sites.

Up to the present time, the U.S.S.R. has continued to develop an advanced ABM missile to replace the Galosh in the Moscow complex and appears to be increasing the number of its launchers from 64 to 100. In contrast, the United States has no operational ABM's and has, in essence, given up the Safeguard program, other than one site for defense of the ICBM field at Grand Forks—which is to become operational in late 1974. There is no indication of American intent to build the allowed ABM site for defense of the Nation's capital in the near future.

The executive agreement for deployment of strategic offensive missiles places numerical ceilings on the deployment of ICBM's and submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM's). The numerical ceilings were supposed to equal actual missile deployments, plus the number of missiles being built for deployment at the time the treaty was signed. Additionally, there are allowable variations to account for substitutions of certain new weapons for older ones. In sum and substance, however, the U.S. ceilings equaled actual deployments, a figure that has remained unaltered since 1967. On the other hand, the ceiling for the U.S.S.R. was substantially higher than the strategic missiles actually deployed on 26 May 1972 and, furthermore, for the long term the Soviets were permitted near half again more missiles than the United States. That is, the U.S.S.R. is permitted 2,359 missiles to 1,710 for the United States, or a numerical advantage of 649. (See figures 1 and 2.) Particularly bothersome is the fact that the Soviet ceilings were U.S. derived figures—agreed to by the U.S.S.R.—and in no way represent a Russian statement of the actual number of strategic weapons they have in place or under construction.

While the interim agreement set quantitative limits on ICBM's and SLBM's, no prohibitions were placed on qualitative improvements. That is, technological advances to missiles and missile systems are permitted—such as multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles (MIRV's), improved missile accuracy, et cetera. It is in this latter category, as well as certain forces not included in the agreements, that the United States justifies the numerical missile superiority granted the Soviets. That is, the MIRV program gives the United States a 2 to 1 lead in numbers of warheads, and this lead is projected throughout the 5-year agreement. Nevertheless, because of the size of Soviet weapons, the U.S.S.R. can place about four times more "megatonnage on target" than can the United States.

In terms of strategic forces not covered in the agreements, the administration has noted that "to assess the overall balance it is also necessary to consider those forces not in the agreement; our bomber force, for instance, is substantially larger and more effective than the Soviet bomber force."[9] Two points are pertinent here. First, is that "bomber force" refers only to heavy bombers (maximum range of over 6,000 miles). In this category it is true the United States holds numerical advantage (457 to 140) over the Soviets. When heavy bombers are combined with other delivery vehicles, the gap then is narrowed to 332 in favor of the U.S.S.R., versus the 649 Russian edge that occurs without taking bombers into consideration.[10] What seems to be neglected in this reasoning is a comparison of United States and Soviet air defense forces. While the United States has some 600 interceptors and 500 surface-to-air (SAM) launchers, the U.S.S.R. has near 3,000 interceptors and 10,000 SAM launchers. "The Soviet Union's commanding lead over the United States in numbers of air defense radar sites, command and control facilities, surface-to-air missile launchers, and

United States			Soviet Union			
Titan II	5-10 Mt ea.	54	SS-7/8		5 Mt ea.	209
Minuteman I	1 Mt ea.	260	SS-9	(+ new silos)	25 Mt ea.	313
Minuteman II	1-2 Mt ea.	510	SS-11/13	(+ new silos)	1-2 Mt ea.	1,096
Minuteman III	3 x 200 kt ea.	230				
Total ICBM's		1,054	Total ICBM's			1,618
Polaris A-2	800 kt ea.	128	SLBM's on modern SSBN's		Mt range	710
Polaris A-3	3 x 200 kt ea.	208	SLBM's on older SSBN's		Mt range	30
Poseidon	10 x 50 kt ea.	320				
Total SLBM's		656	Total SLBM's			740
Total Launchers		1,710	Total Launchers			2,358

*Operational and Under Construction or Conversion.

Sources: *Commanders Digest,* Nov. 15, 1973.
International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1973-1974* (London: 1973).

Fig. 1—United States & U.S.S.R. Strategic Offensive Missile Launchers Associated with Interim SAL Agreement*

	1967		1969		1973		Interim SAL Ceilings	
	U.S.	U.S.S.R.	U.S.	U.S.S.R.	U.S.	U.S.S.R.	U.S.	U.S.S.R.
ICBM's	1,054	460	1,054	1,050	1,054	1,527	1,000	1,409
SLBM's	656	130	656	160	656	628	710	740
Total	1,710	590	1,710	1,210	1,710	2,155	1,710	2,358

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1973-1974* (London: 1973).

Fig. 2—Historical Changes in United States/U.S.S.R. Strategic Force Levels

interceptor aircraft is expected to continue over the next five years."[11]

The other point is dismissing gratuitously medium-range bombers (maximum range of 3,500-6,000 miles). With maximum range reduced to combat range because of fuel, weapons load, and flying at optimum penetration altitude, medium bombers can still conduct a one-way intercontinental mission—a factor that does not seem unreasonable in an "all-out" nuclear war. When considering medium bombers, we find the U.S.S.R. has about 800, and the United States 74.[12]

Although often glossed-over in treatments of the SAL agreement, it should be pointed out that SLBM's in Soviet diesel submarines and Soviet submarine launched cruise missiles (SLCM's) in both nuclear and diesel submarines are not within the framework of the agreement. There are about 66 Soviet SLBM's in the 350-750-mile range with warheads of megaton yields that are not considered, as well as some 338 SLCM's in the 450-mile range with warheads of kiloton yields.[13] (The United States does not possess either of these weapons systems.) Most certainly, these weapons can create nuclear devastation if employed against strategic coastal targets.

Although the United States relies on maintaining a qualitative superiority in

strategic weapons, recent developments indicate the U.S.S.R. is challenging the American lead. For example, in August 1973 Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger disclosed that the Soviets successfully demonstrated flight tests of the MIRV capability on at least two of their missiles. The SS-17 (comparable to Minuteman) and the SS-18 (the possible successor to the huge 25 Mt SS-9) were tested, each with four and six MIRV's, respectively. In this context one might note that each SS-18 warhead is on the order of one megaton; while the biggest U.S. MIRV is mounted on the Minuteman III, which carries three warheads of about 20 kt each. Soviet MIRV development is certainly significant, yet there are at least three new Soviet ICBM's in advanced development and testing that are probably follow-ons for the older SS-9, SS-11, and SS-13. In addition, the Soviets have a 4,000-mile SLBM for their new Delta-class ballistic missile nuclear powered submarine. A comparable U.S. missile for the Trident submarine is years away.

The crux of the matter is that MIRV is not in the SAL agreement, so the U.S.S.R. can overcome the U.S. advantage in technology; however, the United States is constrained to present strategic force levels and cannot overcome the Soviet numerical advantage.

There are, however, many weapons and weapon systems not included in SALT, and certainly some of them have no place in the accords. For instance, what the Soviets call American "forward based systems" (FBS)—meaning European based U.S. tactical missiles, fighter-bombers, and carrier-based strike aircraft—seem best dealt with as "theater forces" along with Soviet intermediate and medium-range ballistic missiles (I/MRBM's), and light bombers in the current mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) talks involving NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Also, British and French strategic forces do not "fit" in the agreement but might be handled on a bilateral basis—as the Soviets likely would want the United States to deal with the strategic forces of China (P.R.C.).

In weighing the national security objectives of the United States and U.S.S.R. against the terms of the SAL agreements and the strategic balance today, the contention that the accords "enhance the security of both sides" is open to question. The stated strategic objectives of the United States include nuclear deterrence, assured destruction, and crisis stability. Those of the U.S.S.R. include nuclear deterrence, a counterforce damage-limiting ability, and a war-winning goal. So, in light of the continuing Soviet strategic buildup, one might examine official American strategic evaluations, before and after the 26 May 1972 agreements, for possible insights.

In his 25 February 1971 foreign policy statement, President Nixon stated in part that the number of Soviet strategic forces now exceeds the level needed for deterrence.[14] At that time he also observed that Soviet offensive systems have clearly developed to a point where certain further improvements, as well as increased launcher deployments, could pose a threat to U.S. land-based missile retaliatory forces and thus threaten stability.[15] And finally, the President mentioned the strategic balance would be endangered if we limited defensive forces alone and left the offensive threat to our strategic forces unconstrained.[16]

Despite the President's admonitions in 1971, the agreements signed in 1972 self-imposed numerical limits on U.S. strategic forces below those given the Soviets, while allowing both sides a free hand in making qualitative improvements to their forces.

The U.S.S.R. continues, near unabated, in improving its strategic position. Over 68 new SLBM launchers have been added to the Soviet inventory since mid-1972. Additionally, at least

three new Soviet ICBM's have been noted, as well as MIRV testing and a new long-range SLBM. In strategic defensive forces, the United States has given up a major Safeguard system for a single missile site defense that will not be operational until late 1974. On the other hand, the U.S.S.R. has an ABM complex operational in the Moscow area and is making qualitative and quantitative improvements to this system.

If, in fact, the 1971 Soviet strategic posture was threatening, as indicated by the President, then subsequent developments makes one more uneasy over an "enhanced U.S. security." To be sure, in 1973 the President, in commenting on the above-mentioned Soviet strategic force improvements, said,

> If present trends continue and we do not take remedial steps, the forces which we currently rely upon to survive an attack and to retaliate could be more vulnerable. At some time in the future we could face a situation in which during a crisis there could be a premium to the side that initiated nuclear war. This would be an unstable and dangerous strategic relationship. Such a strategic environment is unacceptable.[17]

Since it appears that there is reason to question the contention that the 26 May 1972 arms agreements did, in fact, enhance the security of both sides, one might ask, What is left of SALT? The increase in Russian nuclear capability since 1972 can hardly increase the reliability of American nuclear deterrence or its assured destruction capability, despite the qualitative improvements made to some existing U.S. missiles. Additionally, the development of MIRV by the U.S.S.R. along with their megaton yield warheads, would seem to negate rather than to enhance the U.S. objective of crisis stability, while at the same time improving Soviet damage-limitation.

In stark contrast, Soviet deterrence appears enhanced by the same measure that U.S. deterrence is degraded. MIRV and three new ICBM systems tend to bolster a Russian counterforce damage-limiting capability and correspondingly contribute to their war-winning strategy. There seems little doubt the U.S.S.R. considers both quantitative superiority and qualitative competence important to its strategic objectives.

While the United States can take remedial steps in such fields as "hard-target" warheads for a "limited counterforce" capability, SLCM's, mobile ICBM's, et cetera, it remains difficult to see how the 26 May 1972 agreements enhanced the security of the United States. The argument that the interim agreement slowed down the Soviet force buildup cannot be established as no one really knows Soviet intentions. After all, if the United States continued to deploy strategic missiles at the rate it did between mid-1963 and mid-1964, today it would have over 100,000 missiles deployed! In total, it appears that the United States is worse off, the Soviet Union is better off, and deterrence may be even more questionable today than it was in May 1972.

With the above situation as a backdrop, one would hesitate to predict great success for SALT-II. The 1972 5-year agreements could just expire, for the United States has numerical missile inferiority and no monopoly on technology, research, development, or modernization. If deterrence, damage-limitation, and crisis stability are really important, then support for strategic nuclear parity, as advocated by the Jackson amendment to the ABM Treaty of 14 September 1972, indeed makes sense. Parity, after all, does not preclude a mutual reduction in numbers, and technology might then be a safer and more effective strategic stabilizer.

NOTES

1. "Statement by the White House Press Secretary Following the Signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement," *Commanders Digest,* 10 August 1972, p. 32.
2. *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: Shaping a Durable Peace,* A Report to the Congress by Richard Nixon, 3 May 1973 (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1973), p. 182.
3. *Ibid.*
4. V.D. Sokolovskii, *Soviet Military Strategy,* RAND R-416-PR (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1963), p. 313.
5. Malinovskii cited in Sokolovskii, p. 314.
6. Krylov cited in Foy D. Kohler, *et al., Soviet Strategy for the Seventies* (Miami: Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami Press, 1973), p. 86.
7. *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil,* quoted in Kohler, p. 87.
8. Kohler, p. 87.
9. *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's,* p. 201.
10. "DOD Summary of Principal Impacts of the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreements," *Commanders Digest,* 10 August 1972, p. 9.
11. *Commanders Digest,* 15 November 1973, p. 12.
12. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1973-1974* (London: 1973), p. 71.
13. *Ibid.,* p. 69.
14. *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: Building for Peace,* A Report to the Congress by Richard Nixon, 25 February 1971 (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1971), p. 168.
15. *Ibid.,* p. 190.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 194.
17. *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: Shaping a Durable Peace,* p. 183.