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Arms Control and Heavy Missiles

by

Richard C. Thornton

and

William H. Lewis

The governing concept infusing US nuclear strategy over the past two decades has been mutual assured destruction (MAD). This concept postulates that once the United States and the Soviet Union achieved an invulnerable second-strike capability, stability would result. By definition the doctrine required that each side be able to offer a genuine threat to the other in the form of an invulnerable second-strike capability. Thus, if either side's second-strike capability became vulnerable it would be necessary to reestablish an invulnerable retaliatory force.

It was the added vulnerability of Minuteman to swelling Soviet strategic power that became the central problem which US strategists tried to solve from the very beginning of the strategic arms negotiations in 1969. Minuteman vulnerability was a function of both a quantitative and qualitative improvement in the Soviet Union's heavy missile force. This enhanced Soviet capability over the course of time would place the US ICBM force in virtual hostage.

The American approach was an attempt to negotiate a limit to the threat to Minuteman but, as that began to fail, to rebuild an invulnerable second-strike capability in the form of the long-range cruise missile. The decision to reestablish mutual assured destruction at the counterforce level through the deployment of a cruise missile force followed the realization that arms control negotiations would fail, and that the United States could not reestablish the balance with ballistic missiles without being provocative. In fact, US leaders tried unsuccessfully to bargain an emerging cruise missile capability for limitation of the Soviet Union's heavy missile counterforce capability. It would not be until relatively late in the negotiating process that Soviet leaders perceived the significance of the cruise missile as a long-range counterforce system and attempted to block its development. However, at no point in the available record does it appear that Soviet leaders were willing to place any real limitations on their own emerging offensive threat to Minuteman.

In a related maneuver, throughout the negotiations US policymakers urged a one-way mix from land-based to sea-based launchers on the grounds that sub-launched missiles were less vulnerable than fixed, land-based launchers. It was also true that the sub-launched missiles were less accurate and destined to remain less accurate than the land-based systems for many years, and therefore, were less of a threat to Minuteman. In other words, limiting the Soviet heavy missile force and "mixing to the sea" were both roads to the same objective of reducing the vulnerability of Minuteman. Moreover, since the United States held a commanding lead in submarine technology it promised to enhance the overall US position.

United States arms limitation policy can best be understood in terms of the evolution of the Soviet Union's counterforce capability, of which there were three fundamental stages. The launcher stage, which involved developing missiles with sufficient range to attack US targets, embraced the period 1969-1972; the MIRV stage which involved building a sufficient number of warheads with which to attack, the period 1973-1976; and the terminal guidance stage, involving the development of the necessary accuracy to present a serious threat to US Minuteman silos, spanned the years from 1977 to the present. Each stage corresponded roughly to a phase in the US negotiating policy.

Public commentary aside, it would be incorrect to assume that the Soviet Union deceived or otherwise misled the United States. The Soviet Union's weapons developments were always fully understood, if not correctly assessed. US negotiators calculated from the beginning that the Soviet Union was moving toward a counterforce capability which at a certain point would place Minuteman at risk.¹ The American negotiating effort was directed toward preventing the emergence of the threat to Minuteman at each stage, or failing that, to limit the threat to acceptable levels and, finally, when failing in that effort, to develop a second-strike counterforce capability which would validate the doctrine of mutual assured destruction and reestablish strategic stability. At no point in the historical record is there evidence that the United States sought to reestablish strategic weapons superiority over the Soviet Union.

Interpreting SALT I. The United States' objective in entering the strategic arms negotiating talks was to reduce the Soviet attack capability against Minuteman, and thereby preserve the survivability of its land-based intercontinental ballistic missile force. The two initial US proposals (options C and D) offered in the opening rounds of negotiations reflected this objective. Option C called for an aggregate limit on ICBM and SLBM launchers of 1,710, with a freeze on further construction. It placed a sublimit of 250 for the SS-9, the heavy missile which at this stage possessed the potential to become a MIRVed counterforce weapon. This option also

included a MIRV ban that was to be verified by means of on-site inspection. Given the historical Soviet aversion to on-site inspection proposals, there was little likelihood that option C would be selected by Moscow. Furthermore, the fact that the United States linked a MIRV ban with on-site inspection implied that Washington, too, had little desire for a MIRV ban (the United States was at that moment beginning to MIRV Minuteman). While proposing a MIRV ban gained the administration credit in arms control circles, it was nevertheless a risky proposition as Moscow could have delayed if not prevented the MIRVing of Minuteman by denying itself that same option.

Option D would achieve the same objective by a different means—it stipulated an ICBM-SLBM aggregate limit of 1,710 launchers, a freeze on further construction of silos, and a sublimit of 250 launchers for the SS-9 heavy missile. It differed from option C in that there was no MIRV ban, and the aggregate and sublimits were to be reduced over the course of a seven year period by one hundred launchers per year. By the end of the seven year period the aggregate total would be 1,000 launchers and the SS-9 sublimit total would be approximately 125.² In other words, although more generous than option C, option D also sought to constrain the incipient Soviet counterforce capability. Option C would allow 250 single warhead SS-9 launchers, while after seven years option D would allow a MIRVed force of 125 launchers for a total of 1,250 warheads, assuming ten warheads per launcher.

Neither the larger unMIRVed force, nor the smaller MIRVed force would present an overwhelming threat to Minuteman. Not surprisingly, Moscow rejected both options. In August 1970 the United States offered option E, which exceeded the parameters established in the first two proposals. While still insisting upon a single treaty to cover both offensive and defensive systems, the United States now proposed an aggregate total of launchers (including bombers) of 1,900, an ICBM-SLBM sublimit of 1,710 and a further sublimit of 250 for SS-9s. The difference here was that the United States now agreed to forgo any MIRV limitation and to accept an ABM limitation of one or no defense sites. The significance of the MIRV ban removal was that Washington had agreed, in effect, to a doubling of the Soviet Union's counterforce force. Assuming ten warheads per launcher, 250 SS-9 or follow-on heavy missiles could now field up to 2,500 warheads, which could indeed present a significant threat to Minuteman.

In its proposals to the Soviet Union—whose negotiators had simply held firm to one position that the two sides should agree to an ABM treaty only—the United States had made three proposals, each giving more ground than the other. Proposals C, D and E progressively offered the Soviets 250 unMIRVed launchers with 250 warheads, 125 MIRVed launchers with up to 1,250 warheads and 250 MIRVed launchers with up to 2,500 warheads per

launcher. At some point during the discussion of option E, American negotiators offered to trade off a just emerging US cruise missile technology for an agreement to limit the Soviet Union's fast growing heavy missile force.³ Although the Soviets declined to trade a future capability for an existing one, they may well have underestimated the US cruise missile technology. Soviet scientists had been unable to develop the necessary miniaturized components to provide adequate range or accuracy for their own cruise missile systems, which were limited to 600 kilometers.

The Soviet reaction to option E in August 1970 was to stall the negotiations, continuing to insist on an ABM treaty only and tossing in the forward bases issue for consideration. US negotiators interpreted this Soviet move as a bid to buy time for building up the Soviet missile force in order to gain the desired margin over the still limited US force. There was a halt of silo construction since the early fall but the new silo construction would carry the Soviet heavy missile force close to the three hundred mark by the end of 1971. Recognizing this, US negotiators now pressed for an agreement. In January 1971, Henry Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin opened what became known as the "back channel," through which critical exchanges henceforth took place.

It was at this time that Kissinger insisted that there must be a link between offensive and defensive systems.⁴ Dobrynin replied by stating that Moscow wished to conclude an agreement and although preferring an ABM treaty only, was willing to settle for something else. That something else would emerge over the course of the next two-and-a-half months in the so-called "20 May 1971 breakthrough agreement." The May breakthrough was a compromise in which the United States agreed to settle for an ABM treaty plus an accompanying five-year interim agreement on offensive arms, thus satisfying Washington's demand for simultaneous linkage of offensive and defensive systems. Moscow got the ABM treaty it wished while compromising on an interim agreement covering offensive arms. The May breakthrough was an effort by the United States to keep Moscow tied to the negotiating process, an effort which, in retrospect, may not have been necessary. By April of 1971 the evolution of the US-China connection was becoming increasingly apparent. Kissinger appears to have felt that Moscow's perception of the connection would have hampered an agreement on strategic arms. The reverse was true. The appearance of the United States and China moving together made Moscow more desirous of an agreement, in the hopes of preventing the emergence of a combination against the Soviet Union. In fact, the Soviet Union had proposed the previous June a superpower pact with the United States which, if accepted, would have eliminated the possibility of any US-China combination.⁵

When Moscow renewed its silo construction in early 1971, US leaders perceived that the arms control talks had essentially failed. The new

construction would provide Moscow with approximately three hundred heavy missiles which, once MIRVed and fitted with improved terminal guidance systems, would become a deadly threat to the Minuteman force. A three hundred heavy missile force MIRVed with ten warheads per launcher would enable the Soviet Union to target each US silo with two warheads and still retain approximately one thousand MIRVed warheads and the balance of their ICBM force in reserve. The failure to prevent or even to limit the emergence of the first (launcher) stage of the counterforce threat to Minuteman led to a major decision. The US leadership decided to proceed with the development of a "nonprovocative," invulnerable, second strike, counterforce capability in the form of long-range cruise missiles that could be launched from the air, the sea and the ground. In an unpublicized decision, the United States responded to the Soviet strategic missile buildup with the cruise missile, seeking to neutralize the Soviet threat and to reestablish the MAD balance.⁶

Once the decision to counter Moscow's ballistic missile force with long-range cruise missiles had been taken, it was then in US best interest that the Soviet Union commit as many resources to the fixed, land-based force as possible, for silos became future targets for the cruise missile force. This would tend to explain why the final aggregates for SALT I and SALT II placed such high ceilings on launchers. SALT I Interim Agreement allowed the United States an aggregate launcher total of 1,710 and the Soviet Union 2,347, of which 1,607 were to be land-based missiles with a further sublimit of 308 for the heavy SS-9 force.

In terms of preventing or limiting the emergence of a counterforce threat to Minuteman, the SALT I agreements must be judged as a major failure for the United States. The agreed sublimit for heavy missiles in the Interim Agreement was 308, a number far higher than was necessary—once that force was MIRVed and made accurate—to eliminate Minuteman in a first strike. Indeed, the Soviet Union was permitted to accomplish the buildup of a counterforce threat fully within the terms of the Interim Agreement. In fact, Moscow would begin significant MIRV testing for the second stage of development in 1973.

The Approach to SALT II—the Vladivostok Transition. Having failed to prevent the completion of the first stage of a Soviet counterforce capability, the United States then focused on limiting the full development of the second or MIRV stage. Washington's policymakers achieved as little success in the latter as they had achieved in the former. The counterforce issue now moved to the forefront of US concerns, yet not to center stage in the negotiations, as testing on a new generation of Soviet ICBMs (SS-17, 18, 19 and the land mobile SS-16) began in late 1973 as well as initial MIRV testing. All weapons of the new generation carried on-board computers which allowed the reentry

warheads to compensate for shifting winds and other factors during the terminal phase of flight.⁷ These developments, combined with a Soviet proposal in March of 1973 that there should be numerical limits placed on MIRVs but no throw weight limits, precipitated a strategic debate in Washington over the proper response to Moscow's step closer to the establishment of an unambiguous counterforce threat to Minuteman.

The principal protagonists in the debate were Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger. The essential difference between the two men centered on their assessments of the evolution of the overall strategic situation. Kissinger believed that the momentum of the Soviet weapons buildup was continuing and therefore the United States should move to obtain an agreement now rather than wait until the Soviet bargaining position would be even stronger. Schlesinger, on the other hand, argued that the Soviet Union needed "détente" more than the United States and therefore the United States should offer tougher choices to the Soviets, and be prepared to recommence arms competition should Moscow refuse self restraint. The defense secretary believed that the United States still retained leads in several areas of missile technology which could be exploited to advantage, should arms competition resume. These technological advantages were, however, transitory and must be used before Soviet technological progress overtook the United States. Although Secretary Kissinger's view prevailed, reaffirming the US intention to reach a strategic arms accord with Moscow, the significance of the so-called "Schlesinger Doctrine" was that it signaled US determination to make the necessary counterforce improvements to keep pace with Moscow's arms programs.

In June 1974, the United States responded to Moscow's March proposal. While agreeing to place numerical limits on MIRVs and set none on throw weight, the United States countered emphasizing the concept of "essential equivalence." The United States should be allowed higher numbers in view of their lighter missiles capable of less throw weight. The US proposal limited its force to 1,050 and the Soviets to 550-700. Moreover, Washington proposed that both sides gradually phase out single warhead ICBMs, compensating their loss by one for one additions to SLBM forces.⁸ Moscow rejected the US counteroffer and reinjected the forward bases issue again, signaling that no deal was possible on these terms. The Soviets insisted that Moscow required superiority in both numbers and throw weight in considering the many adversaries the Soviet Union faced, particularly the People's Republic of China.

The June discussions between Kissinger and Soviet leaders were manifestly unsatisfactory from the American viewpoint, prompting the Secretary of State to declare that unless MIRV limits were agreed upon the resultant explosion of numbers of warheads would make it "impossible to describe what strategic superiority means."⁹ This was also the occasion for his

celebrated remark: "What in the name of God is strategic superiority . . . at these levels of numbers? What do you do with it?" Of course and as Kissinger well knew (he later repudiated his remark), the greater the destructive power possessed by one nation over another the greater the political utility of those weapons in crisis situations involving third parties. At high levels of weaponry the mere appearance of superiority became all important for purposes of political coercion. What emerged from the June 1974 discussions between US and Soviet leaders, if it had ever been in doubt, was that Moscow would not accept any significant limitation on its offensive strategic forces.

The Vladivostok accords reached between Presidents Ford and Brezhnev on 24 November 1974 reflected an American sense of resignation that arms reductions would never take place and, instead, were an attempt to leave open the option to match the Soviet weapons buildup. The accord, which was to run for the decade 1975-1985 postulated equal but high ceilings for both countries of 2,400 strategic launchers. The agreement allowed the freedom to mix among ICBMs, SLBMs, and bomber forces within sublimits of 1,320 for MIRVed launchers and 308 for heavy missiles, the same restriction as contained in the SALT I Interim Agreement for heavy missiles. There would be no throw weight limit but neither would any new silo construction be allowed. In addition the United States agreed to include land mobile and bomber-launched missiles, as long as these were counted in the aggregate total of 2,400. In return for these generous terms, the Soviet Union dropped its claims on forward bases. Finally, no constraints were placed on force modernization, including improvements in missile guidance and accuracy. This meant that the United States could proceed with Trident, the B-1 bomber and cruise missile programs, while the Soviet Union could improve MIRV guidance technology. Negotiations were to resume no later than the 1980-1981 timeframe for the period 1985 and beyond.

In the post-Vladivostok phase, Moscow continued to refuse limits on its own forces while making a bid to gain control of the US cruise missile force. The United States, in turn, appeared to be as willing as before to trade off limits on the cruise missile for limits on heavy missiles and the Backfire bomber, a new aircraft just then entering the Soviet inventory. After Vladivostok, as the strategic value of the long-range cruise missile became clearer, the Russians argued that the cruise missile should be included retroactively in the limit for air-launched missiles set at Vladivostok. The United States demurred, taking the position that the Vladivostok agreement referred to ballistic missiles and since the cruise missile was not a ballistic missile it was excluded. Later in September 1975, Secretary Kissinger specifically proposed to exclude both the cruise missile and the Backfire bomber from the aggregate ceiling of 2,400 established at Vladivostok, allowing each side two to four hundred cruise missiles and Backfire bombers, respectively.

In January 1976, the cruise missile issue came squarely to the forefront of the negotiations as the United States sought to respond to Soviet objections. Kissinger now proposed to limit Backfire to a total of 250 bombers during the period 1977-1982 and to exclude it from the 2,400 aggregate entirely after that. In return for this, the US Secretary of State offered a partial inclusion of the long-range cruise missile within the sublimit for MIRVed launchers. The United States would agree to count each bomber carrying between 12 and 20 cruise missiles, each with a range of 1,500 nautical miles, as one MIRVed launcher. Kissinger also offered to limit the range on the submarine-launched cruise missile to 600 kilometers, even though the design range on the Tomahawk was 2,000 nautical miles. Finally, he proposed that there be no range limit for surface ship-launched cruise missiles, but that they be limited to 250 missiles on twenty-five ships.

Moscow's reaction was to attempt to free Backfire from any but the most minimal constraints and to attempt to place tight restrictions on the cruise missile. The Soviets refused to count Backfire within the Vladivostok aggregates, but offered to curb its deployment so it could not function as a strategic bomber against the United States. As far as the cruise missile was concerned, Moscow wanted to count each bomber with ten or more as one MIRVed launcher and to reduce the range of the air-launched cruise missile to 1,000 nautical miles. All other cruise missiles were to be restricted to a range of 600 kilometers, or 372 miles, the range of their own cruise missile. The United States rejected the Soviet proposal.

Although it was publicly assumed that the Vladivostok agreement would form the basis for a SALT II accord, such was not the case. On the surface, the Vladivostok agreement failed to function as a transitional instrument to a new SALT treaty because of the inability of the two sides to resolve the cruise missile and Backfire questions, but the deeper cause was that it was becoming increasingly clear to US officials that Moscow's strategic weapons program continued to gain ground. Put another way, the United States was not keeping pace. Aside from the Poseidon conversion program, no other strategic weapons programs were operational after 1974. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had begun to deploy MIRVed weapons in 1975 and the time was not far off when, with the development of improved guidance and accuracy, Moscow could mount a formidable first-strike threat to Minuteman (it was, however, assumed that refinements in third stage, or guidance technology would continue to elude Soviet scientists until the early to mideighties).¹⁰

Under Donald Rumsfeld, who had succeeded James Schlesinger as Secretary of Defense, the United States increasingly took into consideration the need to improve the survivability of the nation's first-strike forces, having failed to prevent or even to limit the emergence of the first and second stages of the Soviet Union's first-strike counterforce capability. Rumsfeld

requested funds for the development of a land mobile ICBM (the MX) as another means to improve the survivability of the US land-based systems against a first strike. Restating the US commitment to mutual assured destruction, Secretary Rumsfeld declared that for "longer-term stability . . . both sides should probably adopt some form of survivable basing mode for their ICBMs."¹¹ Of course, it would have been restating the obvious to observe that it was only the United States and not the Soviet Union that had to "adopt some form of survivable basing mode," since the Soviet Union already had achieved this condition.

The Abortive SALT II Treaty. It was the third stage—improved terminal guidance—that US leaders had attempted to stave off in the arms control talks from the very beginning. Nonetheless, its evolution appeared suddenly and unexpectedly early in the first weeks of the newly elected Carter administration. The development forced a dramatic shift in US arms control policy, although the ultimate objective remained a stable superpower balance characterized by mutual assured destruction. Evidence that the Soviet Union had begun to test a new terminal guidance system that would greatly improve the accuracy of Soviet MIRVs raised grave problems. When retrofitted to the heavy missile force the new system would give Moscow the destabilizing capability of conducting a crippling first strike against Minuteman. Neither country had ever possessed an ICBM first-strike counterforce capability previously, although the United States had briefly held a first-strike countervalue advantage in the midsixties.

Despite the fact that it would be some time before the entire Soviet MIRV missile force could be equipped with the new guidance system, the development represented a major miscalculation by US intelligence. It had been widely assumed that the Soviet Union would not reach the "third stage" until the early to mideighties, which meant that Minuteman would be survivable until then. It was further assumed that by that time one of the other US programs—the cruise missile, MX, or Trident II—would be ready for deployment, reducing to a minimum if not eliminating entirely any period of vulnerability for the nation. The earlier than expected appearance of the new development would now open a window of vulnerability of several years until the United States could close it by deploying a survivable, second-strike, counterforce weapons system of its own.

The Carter administration saw one slim hope of avoiding the vulnerability problem, a genuine arms reduction. This hope was expressed in the "comprehensive proposal" presented to the Soviet Union in late March 1977 by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Vance proposed that the two countries either go ahead with the Vladivostok agreement, deferring those areas where disagreement still existed in the matters of cruise missiles and Backfire, or agree on major reductions in strategic arms, the administration's preferred course.

The comprehensive proposal that Secretary Vance outlined in Moscow would indeed have eliminated any window of vulnerability for the United States by requiring of the Soviet Union that it dismantle its counterforce threat.¹² Compared to the Vladivostok agreement the comprehensive proposal called for reducing the aggregate launcher totals from 2,400 to 2,000 or 1,800, the MIRV sublimit from 1,320 to 1,200 or 1,100, the ICBM sublimit from 820 to 550 and within that sublimit a further reduction applicable only to the Soviet Union's SS-9 and SS-18 forces. The Carter administration's proposal would have required that Moscow reduce the 308 figure, agreed to in SALT I and carried over into the Vladivostok agreement, to 150. There would be a freeze on ICBM construction by both sides as well as a test and development prohibition, a ban on mobile ICBMs and a ban on cruise missiles with a range over 2,500 kilometers (1,550 nautical miles). Cruise missiles with a range between 600 and 2,500 kilometers were to be carried only by heavy bombers and be counted in the MIRV launcher sublimit. Finally, the United States wanted assurances that the Backfire bomber would not be used as a strategic vehicle to justify its exclusion from the treaty.

Reduced to its essence, the Carter administration's comprehensive proposal was close to the original option D put forward by the Nixon administration's negotiators which sought to place an upper limit on the Soviet's heavy MIRVed force. If accepted by Moscow, the Soviets would be limited to a total of 1,500 warheads maximum (ten per launcher), far less than would be necessary to conduct an effective first-strike against Minuteman. If the Soviets rejected the comprehensive proposal, the United States was willing to go forward with the Vladivostok agreement, except that it would accept no limitations on the development of a long-range cruise missile force. Thus, regardless of the choice Moscow would make, the United States sought either to eliminate or counter the threat to Minuteman and reestablish mutual assured destruction once again.

Even though the Soviet Union denounced the Vance proposals as a "cheap trick," by May of 1977 the two countries had produced what was termed a "three-tiered framework" for a SALT II treaty. The agreements would be arrayed in a *Treaty*, whose duration would be until 1985; an attached *Protocol* of three years; and a joint *Statement of Principles*.¹³ The treaty would be based upon the Vladivostok accords, whose aggregate numbers, however, were still open to negotiation. The protocol would cover areas of disagreement, such as the cruise missile and Backfire; and the Statement of Principles would contain an agreed set of guidelines for future negotiations on substantial reductions of strategic weapons. The Geneva agreements seemed to embody a Soviet promise to reduce weapons in return for US acceptance of the Vladivostok accords which gave Moscow a strong advantage.

Based on the three-tiered concept, in September 1977 US and Soviet negotiators produced another "breakthrough" agreement, which seemed to

offer the possibility for reaching a stable balance. Moscow agreed that SALT II could go beyond Vladivostok, that it could contain sublimits on the more dangerous systems, that it could cover some reductions in forces and that it could prohibit new strategic systems.¹⁴ Fundamentally, however, the September breakthrough amounted to little more than agreement by each side to allow the other to proceed with the central strategic approaches that had been chosen. For instance, the United States no longer insisted that the Soviet Union reduce its heavy missile force; indeed, the United States now agreed to its modernization, that is, the application of new guidance systems which would make the force a threat to Minuteman. Moscow, too, acknowledged the US cruise missile program, allowing the ALCM range to be 2,500 kilometers, but insisting that no deployment take place during the life of the treaty.

Despite the appearance of agreement at this point, SALT II negotiations foundered over the issue of the cruise missile, as Moscow attempted to pull a switch and drive a wedge between the United States and its European allies. In September of 1978 Gromyko proposed that the Soviet Union would drop the range limitation on ALCM in return for a strict 600 kilometer range limitation on GLCM and SLCM, if the agreement were incorporated into the SALT II treaty. This called for the switching of agreements on the cruise missile from the protocol, which had a three year limit, to the treaty, which had an eight-year limit—the protocol expiring in 1980, the treaty in 1985. Behind the Soviet proposal was an attempt to prevent the deployment of the GLCM to Europe which the United States and its European allies were planning as a counter to the Soviet deployment of the SS-20. The Soviet-proposed switch would rule out GLCM deployment, which was tentatively scheduled for 1983. It would also restrict the range of the GLCM, preventing it from reaching Soviet territory from its sites in Western Europe. The United States rejected the Soviet proposal, declaring that it was prepared to keep the range restriction of 600 kilometers on the GLCM only through the protocol period ending in 1980.¹⁵

The SALT II treaty that finally emerged was far closer to the Vladivostok accord and, therefore, closer to the Soviet position than to any of the proposals of the Carter administration. The treaty would allow an aggregate number of 2,250 launchers with a freedom to mix within certain sublimits. The MIRV sublimit was to be 1,200 for ICBMs, SLBMs and ALCM-carrying bombers. There would be an 820 MIRV ICBM sublimit and a 308 sublimit for the heavy MIRVed ICBM. The SALT II treaty represented a failure of the United States to ensure the survivability of Minuteman or to prevent the emergence of a Soviet first-strike counterforce capability, even though the Carter administration reserved for the United States the option of proceeding with the development of a second-strike counterforce position in the form of the long-range cruise missile. In fact, the Carter administration, while

cancelling the B-1 bomber and deferring the MX, gradually evolved a position of combining the cruise missile and the B-52 bomber as the major deterrent force. By March of 1980 the air-launched cruise missile had been accorded the "highest national priority,"¹⁶ as prospects for a SALT II faded quickly following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

The Reagan Administration and "Vulnerability." The inherent weaknesses in the strategic negotiations concluded during the decade of the 1970s were clearly perceived by Ronald Reagan during his candidacy in 1980. As the President-elect observed, Soviet and American motives during the negotiations were at considerable variance. The American purpose was to create a stable international environment through rough strategic equivalence and, hence, mutual deterrence. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was pursuing research and development, as well as deployment—strategies that were intended to shift the balance of capabilities in favor of Moscow. The Soviet Union thereby hoped to neutralize the strategic posture of US land-based systems, enhancing its own capacity to engage in political activities inherently destabilizing to the international environment.

The restoration of a creditable American nuclear deterrent, in the view of national security advisors, requires the modernization of US strategic forces on a forced draft basis. As they observe, three-quarters of American warheads are carried on launchers that are at least ten years old, while 75 percent of Soviet warheads are carried on launchers that are five years old or less. With the passage of additional time, the vulnerabilities of the existing land-based Minuteman system can only increase. In October 1981, President Reagan announced plans for a comprehensive force modernization program which, in his view, would diminish the vulnerability of the US strategic arsenal and thereby reduce the risk of superpower conflict.

President Reagan has left himself room for tactical maneuver even when calling for force modernization. His purpose is not nuclear superiority, but parity predicated on an assured second-strike capability by US land-based systems. These systems have a substantially higher degree of accuracy than sea-launched missiles and thus must be viewed as not only a counterforce targeting instrument but one also capable of dealing potentially with Soviet land-based reload capabilities. To deny ourselves the ability to deal effectively with Soviet reloading of land systems would be to diminish dramatically the credibility of strategic deterrence. At the same time, the President recognizes the need to upgrade all existing American systems, since US strategic targeting is a blend of counterforce and countervalue strategies.

The decision to deploy the MX missile demonstrates that we understand the importance of a survivable land-based force as a strong and credible deterrent. MX deployment reaffirms our commitment to the strategic triad, including our desire to protect it against an evolving Soviet threat. The

Trident II missile will provide improvements in the quality of the sea-based triad leg. Trident II is important for the long-term viability of our relatively invulnerable submarine deterrent, and for enhancing the overall effectiveness of the triad. The President's program also recognizes that a secure strategic reserve—that is, forces which can endure even in the event of extended nuclear conflict—can be a critical element in enhancing nuclear deterrence. He, therefore, has decided to deploy sea-based cruise missiles to improve the effectiveness of our strategic reserve.

The decision to build the B-1 bomber reflects both the near-term necessity to correct the growing imbalance in strategic forces and recognition of the long-term importance of bombers to meet strategic and conventional mission requirements. A modernized penetrating bomber is essential for nuclear and conventional roles in the decade immediately ahead.

Some Critical Issues and Challenges. The pressures of Soviet nuclear mobilization have provoked a wide range of negative reactions in the United States and elsewhere. There has been a conspicuous increase in the number of Americans who are seriously advocating a return to neutrality and isolation. These voices have their inevitable echo in Europe, Japan, and in other parts of the world dependent on American protection. The chorus advocating American isolation and accommodation to Soviet power is answered abroad by advocates of neutrality on the one hand, and of expanded nuclear armament on the other.

President Reagan has determined that the United States should follow a more prudent path. He has decided to eliminate the destabilizing Soviet advantage on ground-based strategic missile systems, the first goal of American policy in arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. The United States was slightly ahead of the Soviet Union in the number of warheads on deployed ICBMs in 1972. In 1983, the Soviets have a lead in this area of approximately three to one. Until this Soviet advantage is abolished—either by successful arms control negotiations or through the President's proposed force modernization plan—our sense of vulnerability to strategic land-based systems is likely to remain a factor in Reagan administration national security policy. Continuing Soviet advantage in this field will have a profound adverse effect on American deterrence strength. As *The New York Times* put the issue in a 1982 editorial entitled "How Much is Enough?" the purpose of our arms and our diplomacy is to maintain deterrence, "which has kept the industrial world at peace for the longest stretch in history," and "to forbid the weapons which defy deterrence That done, the arms race can subside. Unless that is done, there will never be enough."

The President shares this view, which is also the basis for the approach of the US government to the Theater Nuclear and START negotiations

currently in progress at Geneva. In these talks, the US delegation has distinguished between retaliatory weapons and those that have first-strike potentialities. What the United States seeks in these talks is stability at equal but substantially lower levels of strategic force—a situation which would permit the United States *and* the Soviet Union to mute crises that threaten both sides' vital interests.

The President's recommendations for the START negotiations are both sound and equitable. They involve weapons ceilings at lower levels of force by significantly reducing Soviet land-based ICBMs.

To achieve this objective, President Reagan has proposed a phased approach to the START negotiations. It is based on the principle that the two arsenals should be equal both in the number of weapons and in their destructive capacity. While no aspect of the problem is excluded from consideration, the United States has proposed that the first phase of the negotiations reduce ballistic missile warheads to equal levels at least one-third below current numbers. Furthermore, to enhance stability, the President has proposed that no more than half these warheads be deployed on land-based missiles. This would involve the reduction of SS-17 and 19 heavy missiles from approximately 600 to 210 and the SS-18 from 308 to 110.¹⁷ In a second phase, which was closely linked to the first, the United States would seek agreement on other elements of US and Soviet strategic forces, including equal limits on ballistic missile throw weight at less than current US levels.

In all phases of the START talks, the United States insists on verification measures that insure compliance by both parties. In the case of provisions that cannot be monitored effectively by national technical means, the United States has proposed that cooperative measures, data exchanges, and collateral constraints be established to enhance confidence in compliance. The Soviet Union has indicated that it will agree to additional, reasonable procedures to supplement national technical means of verification.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union has attacked the Reagan START proposals as unfair, on the ground that they call for unequal reductions—or, in the words of Soviet officials, “unilateral Soviet disarmament.” However, this is hardly the case. Each side now has approximately 7,500 ballistic missile warheads. Under the American proposal each side would have to reduce to no more than 5,000, of which no more than 2,500 could be on ICBMs. While the Soviet Union would be required to dismantle more ICBM warheads than would the United States in order to comply with the ICBM sublimit, the United States would have to dismantle a larger number of submarine-based missiles. In the final analysis, there is nothing inequitable about a ceiling which strengthens deterrent stability for both parties to the negotiations.

Notes

1. Lawrence Freedman, *U.S. Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977), p. 135.
2. Gerard Smith, *Doubletalk?* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980), pp. 125, 477.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 461.
4. John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973), p. 203.
5. Smith, p. 141.
6. Thomas Wolfe, *The SALT Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 352 n. 94.
7. Freedman, p. 170f.
8. Wolfe, pp. 100-101.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
10. Freedman, p. 173.
11. Wolfe, p. 146.
12. Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 52.
13. Wolfe, p. 225.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
17. *The Washington Post*, 9 August 1983, p. A7.

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Ten Pretty Good Rules

- ONE—Never wrestle with a pig; you both get dirty and the pig likes it!
- TWO—Never argue with an idiot; people watching may not be able to tell the difference!
- THREE—Observe everything; admire nothing!
- FOUR—It's easier to obtain forgiveness than it is permission!
- FIVE—Rarely resist the opportunity to keep your mouth shut!
- SIX—Don't ask the question if you cannot live with the answer!
- SEVEN—If you want a new idea, read an old book!
- EIGHT—If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there!
- NINE—Never have a philosophy which supports a lack of courage!
- TEN—Never look back unless you intend to go that way!

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