

been raised by both sides, but particularly by the US, concerning SALT I, SALT II, the ABM Treaty and the Partial Test Ban Treaty. They were cited by the Reagan Administration as a major factor in the US decision to exceed the SALT II limits in late 1986 when the 131st B-52/ALCM carrier was deployed.

CONCLUSIONS

In all such negotiations, it is necessary to distinguish bargaining positions from movement towards substantive agreements. For example, the initial Soviet proposal of 30 September 1985 presented a package in which the definition of 'strategic' and the linkage of INF and intercontinental forces reverted to the earliest days of the impasse in the SALT negotiations. At the same time, the proposal offered major new elements, including particularly the acceptance of US views on the need for deep cuts in strategic forces. While it is important not to ignore the negotiating difficulties involved in stripping unpromising elements from the promising ones, it is nevertheless the case that the recent Geneva negotiations have produced proposals which, several years earlier, would have been seen as major advances.

On the Soviet side, there are several developments of note. First, the Soviets have declared a willingness to negotiate deep cuts in strategic forces of the kind proposed by the Reagan Administration in 1982. They have also shown willingness to accept the idea of a specific ceiling on heavy missiles such as the SS-18. Second, with some twists and turns, they have proposed an INF agreement very similar to that proposed by Reagan in 1982. Third, they have repeatedly declared a willingness to accept verification measures far more intrusive than any that were acceptable in earlier negotiations — although the test of this change of heart lies in the detailed negotiations of verification procedures.

Conversely, the United States position has been substantively unchanged from the earlier period of the Reagan Administration. On balance, the United States has been reactive in the period under review, responding with restraint, and sometimes, as in the INF proposals, appearing to have been caught off-guard by Soviet changes of position. The new element in the US position, as compared with 1982, is the commitment to SDI and the apparent willingness to forego opportunities which were earlier considered high priority (such as the deep reductions in offensive forces) when such opportunities prejudice the SDI programme.

There are indications that there could yet be an operational agreement on SDI which would allow

both sides to conduct extensive research but leave the ABM Treaty intact. As with the abandonment of the SALT II limits, these indications seem to leave the future of arms control agreements evenly poised, with several possible futures. First, as the account of strategic force negotiations indicates, proposals for deep cuts in strategic offensive forces are realistic. Setting aside the linkage with SDI research, the respective positions are sufficiently close on new and lower limits that relatively little staff work would be required to produce a negotiated outcome.

Ironically, perhaps, the second future under discussion makes the accomplishment of important but limited reductions pale into insignificance. As the convulsive effort at Reykjavik indicated, the total elimination of nuclear weapons continues to be a major theme in superpower discussions. While it is too soon to judge the persistence and commitment of the respective leaders to this vision, it might be noted that it has only a tenuous connection to the detailed negotiations in Geneva. In brief, the elimination of all ballistic missiles in ten years, or of all nuclear weapons before the turn of the century, would require a quite different preparation from that which is involved in limited cuts, or an INF agreement. Negotiations at Geneva have focussed on the latter proposals, not the former.

Finally, the compliance issues and the abandonment of SALT ceilings suggest a third plausible future, which is simply that there will be no major agreements to take the place of SALT II, and the nuclear arsenals will be determined by unilateral decisions and tacit agreement. Although the prospects for an agreement on INF still seem promising, Gorbachev has also indicated that an INF accord should be accompanied by a statement of principles on disarmament issues involving SDI. On these broader issues, the United States and the Soviet Union are still very far apart.

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