

American plans to deploy Trident D-5 SLBMs in 1989 will bring a new element into the balance. Because of the accuracy of these warheads, there will be for the first time a significant counterforce capability at sea. Submarines are less vulnerable launching platforms than land-based missile silos because they are mobile and have large areas of the ocean in which to hide. The deployment of the D-5 will give the United States a very strong, relatively secure, counterforce capability (at the highest accuracy estimates the SSKP of the Trident D-5 approaches 100%). There are no signs that the Soviet Union will be able to match this capability within the same time frame.

Strategic Bombers

The United States has the superior capability in this leg of the triad. The US has 278 active bombers (with approximately 250 B-52s in storage) as compared to 160 Soviet bombers. The American bombers are able to carry more weapons than the Soviet bombers, and the weapons they carry — the ALCM and the SRAM — are more capable than the Soviet equivalents. In this light it is interesting to note that the American Reykjavik proposal to eliminate all ballistic missiles would leave the Americans with a substantial advantage because of the size of its bomber force.

Long-range Cruise Missiles

By deploying the cruise missile-capable Bear H bomber, a new version of an old bomber, the Soviet Union has been able to achieve an ALCM capability sooner than expected. However, with around 1500 ALCMs, the United States remains ahead of the Soviet Union, and plans to deploy the stealth advanced cruise missile.

With respect to sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs), the Soviets are said to be close to deploying the SS-N-21 with a range of 3000 km. The US Tomahawk SLCM, now being deployed on surface ships and submarines, has a range of 2500 km.

Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces

The Soviet SS-20 continues to be the dominant factor in the INF missile balance, giving the Soviet Union a decided edge in missile warhead numbers. An agreement to remove or drastically reduce the numbers of INF missiles in Europe appeared to have been close at the time of the Reykjavik summit and would bring an end to Soviet superiority in this category. Even if such an agreement were reached and were coupled with the planned phasing out of

the Soviet SS-4, a number of shorter-range Soviet missiles would still remain in Europe with no NATO counterpart. This is an issue of concern to the Europeans and, at the Reykjavik summit, the Soviet Union apparently agreed to freeze these shorter-range missiles at their present levels and to enter negotiations "to determine their future."

CONCLUSIONS

Who's ahead? The evidence suggests that neither side holds an overall advantage. Advantages in certain categories of weapons are offset by disadvantages in others. These offsetting asymmetries contribute to a sense of stability; both sides are confident in their ability to retaliate and thus deter an attack. While improved counterforce capabilities (for example, the Trident D-5), may undermine this sense of confidence for a time, past experience has shown that short-term technological gains have not, in the long run, led to a decisive edge for one side or the other.

On the other hand, every new weapon complicates strategic arms control negotiations, as do the asymmetries in force structures. The accompanying set of tables may serve as a basic reference for understanding and assessing current and future arms control proposals and counter-proposals.

NOTES

1. K. Tsipis, *Arsenal*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1963, p. 307.
2. L.E. Davis and W.R. Schilling, "All You Ever Wanted to Know About MIRV and ICBM Calculations But Were Not Cleared to Ask," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 17, no. 2, June 1973, p. 210.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
4. See, for example: *Soviet Military Power 1986*, p. 30.

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The author has benefitted from the advice of colleagues within CIIPS and elsewhere, but the views expressed in this paper are the author's own and should not be taken to represent the views of the Institute and its Board.

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