

period of 15-20 years, and that the confirmation be linked to an agreement to make deep reductions in offensive nuclear forces.

Within the Reagan Administration, continued maintenance of the Treaty has been a deeply contentious issue. In July 1986 Reagan responded to the Gorbachev letter by suggesting that the Treaty be confirmed for five years, and that both parties undertake thereafter not to deploy an ABM system for a period of 2 years. Since there is a six-month withdrawal clause in the Treaty, the President effectively offered a 7 1/2-year guarantee, but with no commitment thereafter. The proposal left open the question of permitted research.

At Reykjavik the two sides discussed a 10-year guarantee of the Treaty, apparently with some agreement, but the proposal failed when considered in relation to permissible research and the freedom to deploy ABM defences at the end of the ten-year period. Although both sides claim to have offered the 10-year compromise, in the case of the Soviets it was specifically linked to the parallel elimination of all strategic ballistic missiles. As was noted earlier, US support for such complete elimination has declined in the aftermath of Reykjavik, thus leaving indeterminate the question of agreement on a guaranteed duration.

The Linkage Between ABM Defences and Strategic Offensive Forces

In general, the US position on this matter is that deep reductions in offensive forces accompanied by the deployment of strategic defences are desirable and negotiable. The Soviet position is that the development and deployment of strategic defences is incompatible with deep reductions since the logical counter to the US deployment of ABM defences is to increase offensive forces. It should also be acknowledged that this is the unequivocal position of several former US negotiators and officials, including Robert McNamara, Paul Warnke and Gerard Smith.

It will be noted that, prior to Reykjavik, US proposals called for reductions in the major elements of strategic forces, not for their elimination. To project from the US position, in 1995 each side might hold 6,000 warheads; the US might have a partially deployed defence against ballistic missiles with a parallel defence (unconstrained by any present agreement or treaty) against bombers and cruise missiles. The purpose of the ABM defence would be to 'devalue' offensive missiles such that the opponent would have little incentive to continue to build them. The question whether, at that point, the opponent would be induced to accept further restrictions on offensive forces, or to seek alternative means of delivering nuclear warheads, is left open.

The US position is that the elimination of the threat from intercontinental ballistic missiles would in itself be

a major contribution to stability. Faced at Reykjavik with the argument that there would be no need for defences if ballistic missiles were eliminated by mutual agreement, President Reagan and his advisers responded that strategic defences would be necessary to protect against accident, cheating, and the unpredictable behaviour of third parties.

By contrast, the Soviets see arms reductions and the ABM Treaty as part of an 'organic package'. At Reykjavik the maintenance of the ABM Treaty was linked to the elimination and then abolition of strategic weapons to coincide with the ten-year period of guarantee of the Treaty. Logically, without ballistic missiles there is no need for a Treaty prohibiting defences against them.

In a less visionary context, there appear to be two major Soviet concerns. The first, given the US advantage in certain critical areas of BMD, is the need to counter US defences with more complex offensive missiles. Since this would involve trading-off warheads for penetration aids, the greater the need to devise offensive counter-measures, the less the incentive to give up either numbers or throw-weight in the ICBM force. Second, the Soviets appear concerned about the development of 'space arms' as offensive weapons. It is perhaps no coincidence, therefore, that in Geneva the group dealing with defence and space arms is referred to by Americans as the 'defence' group, and by the Soviets as the 'space arms' group.

Related Issues

There are two issues closely related to the Geneva negotiations which are not, strictly speaking, part of the talks. The first is a comprehensive test ban (CTB), the second is the question of compliance with existing treaties and agreements.

Having undertaken a unilateral moratorium on testing from August 1985 to March 1987, the Soviets sought US support for a joint moratorium as a prelude to a negotiated CTB. They have tended to identify the moratorium and an INF agreement as the two most likely short-term prospects for superpower agreement. However, the US declined to join the moratorium, and has offered a number of reasons in support of continued nuclear testing. Although the test issue remains an important one on the superpower agenda, US opposition to an immediate moratorium suggests that it is unlikely to emerge as the precursor to a major arms control agreement, and, conversely, the failure of the moratorium is unlikely to inhibit such an agreement. So much now seems clear from recent Soviet statements indicating a willingness to concentrate in the first instance on the ratification of the existing partial test ban treaties.

The issue of compliance is beyond the scope of this paper, save only to note that compliance issues have