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## A REVIEW OF THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS ON STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTIONS

by David Cox

### INTRODUCTION

The United States and the Soviet Union began formal negotiations on the control of strategic arms in 1969. Negotiations have continued intermittently since that time. They have resulted so far in two agreements (SALT I and II) aimed at limiting the deployment of strategic offensive arms, and a treaty severely restricting the deployment of ballistic missile defences (the ABM Treaty).

The Interim Agreement on Strategic Offensive Arms (SALT I) was signed in 1972 by President Nixon and Secretary Brezhnev. Effectively, SALT I froze two categories of strategic delivery vehicles — intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBMs), although in the latter case the agreement provided for a certain increase in the number of Soviet SLBMs then deployed. The total number of such delivery vehicles permitted to the Soviets under SALT I was 2,347, whereas the US was permitted 1,710. The disparity reflected in part the technological superiority of US missiles, especially submarine-based, and in part the omission of strategic bombers (a category in which the US enjoyed a decisive advantage). It may also have implied a tacit recognition that the Soviets had to contend as well with British and French forces, and with US intermediate-range nuclear forces in and around Europe, none of which was accepted by the US as part of the SALT I calculations.

In November 1972, the two leaders also signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. This restricted both sides to the deployment of two operational ABM sites, a provision that was subsequently amended in 1974 to one site with 100 operational ABM launchers.

Immediately after the conclusion of the SALT I Agreement, negotiations began on a treaty to extend the strategic arms covered by the Interim Agreement, and to seek equal limits on the numbers deployed. In Vladivostok in 1974, President Ford and Secretary

Brezhnev approved a framework for SALT II which imposed a ceiling of 2,400 to include heavy bombers, ICBMs and SLBMs.

Thereafter, progress in the negotiations slowed. Nevertheless, a second agreement was eventually reached, and signed by President Carter and Secretary Brezhnev in June 1979. The SALT II agreement was not ratified by the United States Senate, and did not formally enter into force. However, both the Carter and Reagan administrations (in the latter case until an announcement to the contrary in June 1986) undertook not to undercut SALT II. The Soviet Union also indicated that it would abide by the agreement.

SALT II established an overall ceiling of 2,400 for all strategic delivery vehicles, and a sub-ceiling of 1,320 for delivery vehicles carrying multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs). It also established detailed provisions for monitoring the Agreement, and for procedures to be followed in decommissioning launchers as a consequence of modernization.

After assuming office, President Reagan agreed not to undercut SALT II, but, both during the 1980 election campaign and after becoming President, he voiced continuing opposition to the agreement. Essentially, the President took the view that the Treaty permitted an excessive increase in the number of strategic **warheads** because the limits placed on the number of MIRVed **launchers** (1,320) allowed considerable scope for increasing the number of re-entry vehicles on each missile. More to the point, he claimed this omission worked to the benefit of the Soviet Union, which had developed much heavier launchers and possessed, therefore, a potential to greatly exceed the United States in the number of warheads deployed on 'heavy' land-based launchers such as the SS-18.

The SALT negotiations had envisaged a third round in which, building on the previous agreements, the two

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