

a strengthening of the agreement, but the chances of this seem slight in view of the continued division of opinion within the Reagan Administration on the value of the Treaty. If the Treaty can survive the next review essentially unscathed, however — and it is suggested above that outright repudiation is unlikely — there is a chance that the next US Administration will be more favourably disposed to continuing and strengthening it. Whether the Soviet Union will wait that long before itself repudiating the agreement, whether by word or deed, remains to be seen. But the fact that the more questionable tests of SDI and any decision actually to deploy a system must await a new US Administration suggests that it would be in the Soviet interest to wait, to continue attempting to achieve agreement with the Reagan Administration in its waning days, but without giving up on the idea of a compromise trading deep cuts in offensive arms for continued preservation of the ABM Treaty, if success continues to elude them in the near-term.

Supporters of the ABM Treaty are often criticized for assuming that it is sacrosanct and set in stone, incapable of being modified in the light of changing technologies and strategic circumstances. The Treaty itself, of course, allows for such modification, whether at the five-year review conferences or more or less continuously through the SCC. It is conceivable that a limited BMD designed to protect strategic deterrent forces and command and control installations could be accommodated within the terms of an amended ABM Treaty. However, the difficulty of distinguishing between such a system and the kind of nationwide defence that the Treaty was originally intended to preclude is always present and may in fact be growing with advancing technology, especially space-based. It is also conceivable, of course, that the two superpowers might indeed choose to pursue a defence-dominated strategic relationship including massive nationwide BMD, as desired by the Reagan Administration. But, apart from its inherent desirability, which most arms control advocates and supporters of the ABM Treaty would dispute, such a goal is unlikely to be attainable without corresponding limitations on strategic offensive forces. Hence, such a world presumes a mutually agreed 'transition.' As a baseline from which to begin such a transition, the ABM Treaty might still prove invaluable.

On balance, then, the prognosis for the Treaty is mixed. While it is unlikely to be abrogated outright in the near-term, there is a danger that its continued erosion may empty it of substance and lead to an ever-deepening crisis in US-Soviet relations. The opportunity is present for reaffirming and strengthening its terms, either through the upcoming review conference or, more likely though still uncertain, as part of the long-awaited 'grand compromise' in strategic arms negotiations. However, as long as the

superpowers are unable to agree on its interpretation and continue to engage in activities apparently inconsistent with its stated aims and terms, the fate of the ABM Treaty will cast a pall over the entire process of nuclear arms control.

NOTES

1. Coit D. Blacker and Gloria Duffy (eds.), *International Arms Control: Issues and Agreements*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1984, p. 252.
2. See, for example: *Soviet Noncompliance*, US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Washington, 1 February 1986, p. 6.
3. Stanford University Center for International Security and Arms Control, *Compliance and the Future of Arms Control: Report of a Working Group*, Global Outlook, Palo Alto, CA, 12 February 1987, p. II-35.
4. *Ibid.*

FURTHER READING

- "The ABM Treaty Interpretation Debate," *Arms Control Today* Vol. 17, No. 7, September 1987, pp. 2-19.
- William J. Durch, *The Future of the ABM Treaty*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, *Adelphi Paper* No. 223, Summer 1987.
- Raymond L. Garthoff, *Policy vs. Law: The Reinterpretation of the ABM Treaty*, Brookings Institution, Washington, 1987.
- Thomas K. Longstreth *et al.*, *The Impact of US and Soviet Ballistic Missile Defense Programs on the ABM Treaty*, National Campaign to Save the ABM Treaty, Washington, 1985.
- Steven E. Miller and Stephen van Evera (eds.), *The Star Wars Controversy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986.

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