

Two years after Vladivostok is SALT worth its salt?

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considerable optimism greeted the successful conclusion of SALT I in May 1972, U.S. Administration spokesmen suggested savings in strategic defence spending, viz. of \$5 to \$15 billion over the next five years. Despite such optimistic assessments, strategic-arms budgets in the United States and the Soviet Union have risen considerably above levels established before the opening of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, and nuclear-weapon stockpiles have more than doubled. Moreover, the prospects of a more significant follow-up program have grown dimmer because of the continuing difficulties of reaching agreement on the Vladivostok Accord of 1974.

In reviewing what has been achieved during seven years of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, there is considerable reason to be pessimistic. Agreements reached to date, both within and outside SALT, have had little, if any, impact on the reduction of armaments. For example, the SALT I agreements contain no provisions for reducing existing weapon systems. Admittedly, the anti-ballistic-missile treaty nip-tuck in the bud what might have become a very costly ABM race, but whether such a race would have occurred, given the increasing scepticism about the effectiveness of such a system, is highly debatable. In the absence of scientific opinion was overwhelmingly in favour of the position that there were many ways of countering any ABM systems through such devices as MIRVs, defence missiles and penetration aids.

The Interim Agreement on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Weapons, signed at the same time as the ABM treaty in May 1972, froze strategic-missile numbers at the levels existing as of July 1, 1972. While placing a ceiling on the number of missile-launchers, the agreement provided for extensive qualitative improvement of existing missiles. Chief among the reasons for this was the fact that each missile could be "MIRVed", allowing an extensive increase in the number of deliverable warheads emanating from ICBM and

SLBM forces. Given the opportunity to "MIRV" missile forces with from three to more than a dozen independent warheads, both sides were in a position to increase appreciably their strategic warhead capabilities by the time the Interim Agreement expired in October 1977.

Tendency prevailed

The tendency to negotiate agreements that would allow both states to produce all the weapons they had planned seems to have prevailed in the case of the 1974 Vladivostok Accord. Although it is somewhat more difficult to evaluate the implications of the numbers established at Vladivostok because of the uncertainty as to whether weapon systems such as the "cruise missile" and the Soviet *Backfire* bomber are to be included, it is clear that considerable latitude for strategic development has been provided. The accord would still allow the United States to "MIRV" some 402 of its existing missile force as of November 1974 and still remain within the 1,320-MIRV ceiling, and it would permit the Soviet Union to produce even more, since its MIRV program was far behind that of the United States. Should the cruise missile or the Soviet Union's *Backfire* bomber not be included in the Vladivostok limits, as seems quite probable unless the 2,400 ceiling on strategic delivery systems is raised, the strategic arsenals of both sides may become even more awesome.

Not only did the Vladivostok Accord do little to restrict the number of strategic delivery vehicles — in several instances allowing increases —, it made no attempt

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