

years of non-deployment followed by two years of negotiation — after which either side could withdraw from the agreement. Crucially, however, he did not specify whether it was the traditional or the so-called 'broad' interpretation of the Treaty that would be adhered to in the meantime.

At the Reykjavik summit in October 1986, Reagan and Gorbachev agreed on a period of ten years' non-abrogation of the Treaty. However, they remained apart on the question of the traditional versus the broad interpretation, and also on what was to follow the ten-year period. Gorbachev wanted any deployment of space-based BMD after that time to be based on mutual agreement, clearly seeing ten years as a minimum, rather than maximum, period of non-deployment. Reagan wanted the freedom to deploy immediately afterward, being unwilling to accept a possible Soviet veto on SDI.

In late January 1987 a working group was set up in Geneva to list the differences between the two sides' interpretations of the ABM Treaty. It was not, however, empowered to *negotiate* on this question; hardliners in the US Administration were opposed even to the listing of differences. The following month President Reagan formally instructed his negotiators not to negotiate, or even discuss, limits on defensive systems more restrictive than the broad interpretation of the ABM Treaty. By the time Secretary of State Shultz visited Moscow in April, the US had fallen back to a seven-year non-withdrawal period to 1994, after which either side would be free to deploy. Shultz had not been authorized to discuss ways of narrowing differences on the Treaty's interpretation, despite reported requests to this effect from both the State Department and the Geneva negotiating team.

At a meeting between Shultz and Shevardnadze in Washington in September, the USSR reportedly offered two alternative proposals: (1) a detailed list of objects not to be launched into space, including limits on the brightness of lasers, the size of mirrors for redirecting laser beams, and the speed of interceptors; or (2) reaffirmation of traditional interpretation of the ABM Treaty, possibly allowing some limited testing in space. Apparently sensitive to the charge that they were demanding limits even more restrictive than the 'restrictive' interpretation of the Treaty, the Soviets soon emphasized the second of these options. This was to last for ten years, after which any unilateral deployment would face the threat of an expanded offensive arsenal. While indicating some flexibility on the period of non-withdrawal, however, the Americans were still unwilling to budge on the Treaty interpretation.

The Reagan-Gorbachev summit meeting in Washington in December failed to resolve the issue. In their joint statement afterwards, the two leaders agreed merely to observe the ABM Treaty "as signed in 1972"

and to conduct research, development, and testing "as permitted by the ABM Treaty." No specifics were mentioned; as before, the issue of the traditional versus the broad interpretation of the Treaty remained unresolved. Reagan and Gorbachev also failed to agree on the length of the non-withdrawal period, although they did specify that further negotiations would begin at least three years before its end. Afterwards, unless otherwise agreed, each side would "be free to decide its course of action." Thus, the United States could begin deploying SDI, while the Soviet Union could make good its threat to take offensive countermeasures, including the abrogation of any agreement limiting strategic offensive arms.

THE FUTURE OF THE ABM TREATY

The ABM Treaty faces a number of possible futures. Certainly, there are influential voices within the Reagan Administration and among its supporters who favour scrapping the Treaty entirely, on the grounds that it was a mistake in the first place and now stands in the way of SDI. Arguing against this is the fierce resistance to such a move that could be anticipated both domestically and from Allied leaders and publics who have continued strongly to support the Treaty in its traditional interpretation. The Allies, in particular, view the ABM Treaty as the cornerstone of *détente*, while arms control advocates throughout the world consider it to be their most significant achievement to date.

Moreover, even among proponents of SDI, there are those who recognize the value of the Treaty and the role it could possibly play in easing a transition from the present offense-dominated nuclear strategy to one of defence-dominance. At a minimum, hardliners recognize that the Treaty as reinterpreted by the Reagan Administration can continue to severely restrict the deployment of conventional, ground-based BMD, in which the Soviets are considered by some to be superior, while leaving unconstrained the research, development, and testing of higher-technology systems in which the US is assumed by most to predominate. By the same reasoning, it would be foolish to cast aside the restraints of the present Treaty before determining that BMD based on unconventional technologies is indeed feasible. Otherwise, the Soviet Union would have a 'head start' in the building of a nationwide ABM system.

Supporters of the ABM Treaty believe that it has served its purpose well and will continue to do so in the future if reaffirmed and strengthened. They acknowledge that the Treaty as originally drafted may contain some unfortunate ambiguities and loopholes, and accordingly could benefit from further clarification of its terms or even formal amendment. They are hoping that the next review conference will be devoted to such