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A REVIEW OF THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS: 1989-1990

by David Cox

Dept. of External Affairs Min. des Affaires extérieures
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INTRODUCTION

The United States and the Soviet Union have been engaged in continuous bilateral negotiations on nuclear arms control since March 1985. Initially, the negotiations in Geneva were divided into three 'baskets': intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF); the strategic arms reduction talks (START); and the defence and space talks, which the Soviets have referred to as 'space weapons' talks.

At the Washington summit in December 1987, the two sides signed the INF Treaty, which provides for the phased reduction of all intermediate-range weapons by 1991, and a ten-year period thereafter in which on-site inspections are permitted to ensure compliance with the Treaty. At the same meeting, Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev issued a communiqué which identified an agreed framework for a START treaty. The framework was intended to provide an impetus to the negotiations in Geneva in the hope that it might be possible to sign an agreement on strategic arms at the Moscow summit planned for June 1988. Although some progress was made in Geneva in the first months of 1988, significant disagreements remained when the two leaders met again in Moscow from 29 May to 2 June 1988. The Moscow meeting produced two valuable agreements — on the establishment of a bilateral nuclear risk reduction centre and the exchange of information about planned missile launches — but the main objective was not achieved. Thereafter, it was accepted that a START agreement would await the election of President Reagan's successor.

This paper reviews the development of the strategic arms and missile defence negotiations in Geneva during 1989, the first year of the Bush Administration, and into the early months of 1990. During this time Soviet strategic forces were undergoing modernization with the deployment of the SS-24 and SS-25 mobile missiles, and the development of a new version (Mod 5) of the heavy SS-18. There appeared to be little controversy in the Kremlin about the course of this modernization. By contrast, the Bush Administration reviewed both the US force posture and the direction of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). The policy review in Washington had considerable impact on the course of the START negotiations in Geneva.

THE BUSH STRATEGIC REVIEW AND START

The tenth round of negotiations in Geneva ended on 16 November 1988, just one week after the US Presidential election. This round of negotiations exhibited a familiar pattern of broad agreement in principle, but considerable differences on the specifics of the draft treaty ranging from the intricate details of verification to important disagreements on the rules to be applied to specific weapons systems. In a valedictory White House statement on 17 November, President Reagan described the negotiations as "a solid foundation on which to build." He also identified the important areas of disagreement: mobile missiles, the modernization of 'heavy' intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), sublimits on ICBM warheads, rules for counting air-launched

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