

tounding "over (-over, over-!) - kill capabilities". Each branch of the U.S. strategic "triad" (land, sea and air) can by itself obliterate Soviet civilization (while the obverse cannot be claimed for Soviet air capabilities, the greater land-based throw-weight of the U.S.S.R. might perhaps be said to possess the offsetting capability to re-kill the corpse of civilization with even more redundant thoroughness than the U.S. land forces).

There was much talk through the 1960s of the dangers of "first-strike". Since the emergence by the mid-Sixties, however, on both sides, of essentially non-vulnerable sea-based forces, this has been nonsense. In fact it always *was* nonsense, and not only because of the early SAC decision to keep part of the bomber fleet airborne. Even the land-based forces as such were, and are, less vulnerable than is sometimes hypothesized; one might point to the long-acknowledged practical, if not theoretical, impossibility of fully co-ordinating the arrival on disparately-located targets of missiles fired from equally disparately-located launch-sites, each after completion of uncertain and complicated launch-preparation and control procedures (in a real sense, the arrival of the first hostile warhead would be adequate and sufficient warning, since it would most likely still leave time for the employment of most of the attacked force!); or one might point to the fact that the disruptive effects of the first incoming detonation are likely to preclude the immediate follow-up required to ensure destruction of a targeted-missile silo.

No expert of stature can foresee any imminent technological change that is even remotely likely to negate the situation of off-setting second-strike forces. There appears no foreseeable likelihood of either side negating the other's power to launch a devastating retaliatory strike.

#### Political exercise

SALT I, then, was at most clearly an exercise in political arms control; it should not be confused with military arms control (even less with arms reduction or disarmament). Neither power cut back or even slowed its research or deployment program on any major weapon system. On the U.S. side, in fact, it might be argued that the political attractiveness of the "bargaining-chip argument" ensured more favourable Congressional attitudes to new strategic programs (B-1, *Trident*, "cruise" missiles) than would otherwise have prevailed. "Bargaining-chip" became an ironic misnomer for the oiling of billion-dollar funding commitments to prestige pro-

grams of dubious worth. Thus one could argue that the B-1 mission could be formed as effectively by cheaper off-shelf 747s with stand-off missiles, and the association of the massively-expensive *Trident* submarine with the truly impressive long-range *Trident* missile was warranted and deceptive, since the latter might with profit be deployed rather than smaller, cheaper platforms.

SALT I merely ratified existing strategic dispositions and perceptions. The United States had long curtailed quantitative-expansion efforts in favour of qualitative strategic-force improvement. And the U.S.S.R. had clearly come to a similar decision by 1972. There could then be no doubt that the dramatic Soviet procurement of the late Sixties and early Seventies was tapering off. Moscow had reached "parity", yet recognized that unremitting pursuit of superiority would have scant if any prospect of success in view of the character of existing second-strike forces, and the limits of present and foreseeable technologies. The latter considerations, as well as appreciation of Congressional scepticism, presumably underlay also the U.S. acceptance of the probable durability of the present balance.

#### No question

There was no question of either side allowing the other undue advantage. The higher missile-booster number allotted to the Soviet Union merely reflected existing realities, realities that had grown out of differing procurement and deployment preferences (viz. the Soviet preference for a "dyad" rather than a "triad" of strategic-force branches). The Soviet missile-booster advantage had no relevance to the need to deploy also against the People's Republic of China, if only because the medium- and intermediate-range missiles adequate to meet that concern were encompassed by SALT. Instead, the Soviet advantage was clearly intended to offset the acknowledged U.S. advantage in other strategic areas.

SALT I was a noteworthy watershed in that it could only be signed by Moscow once it was satisfied that it had attained basic parity. (As indicated by its strategic literature over the previous decades, the U.S.S.R. had long realized that it could accept no semblance of inferiority without abdicating both its ideological aspirations and its self-designated role as leader and protector of the non-capitalist world. And it was furthermore noteworthy that it could only be signed by Washington upon acknowledgement of the probable durability of the new state of affairs.)

*No likelihood  
of technology  
that would avoid  
second strike*