

**The Relationship Between Arms Control and Strategic Doctrine:
US Nuclear Strategy and the SALT/START Experience**

BY

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Abstract

Conceptually, there must be a relationship between strategic doctrine and arms control, because both are ultimately aimed at enhancing national security and international stability. Strategic doctrine is important because it relates military means to political ends with regard to perceived national security needs. Similarly, arms control can be perceived as codifying national security needs in a bi- or multilateral framework, and thus might not only enhance stability, but produce it. While a conceptual link exists at the theoretical level, the question becomes whether it obtains in the operational realm as well. If it does, what is the nature of this relationship?

An examination of the evolution of the US negotiating position at the SALT negotiations, and the environment in which the subsequent treaties emerged is compared and contrasted to the evolution of the US negotiating position at START and those conditions present in which the START I negotiations and agreement were realized. By doing so, the relationship between arms control and strategic doctrine might be better understood.

The SALT-START record has failed to shed any clear light on the relationship between arms control and US strategic doctrine. While doctrine ought to drive arms control negotiations, and this did occur to a greater degree at START than at SALT, there were several instances where US programs and decisions were based on negotiating positions, which indicates that arms control was likely more significant in influencing US strategic doctrine than vice versa.

**Chapter One: The Conceptual and Theoretical Linkage Between Arms
Control and Strategic Doctrine**

The permanent paradox of arms control is that it is either impossible or unimportant.

George F. Will

The historical record in the field of superpower strategic arms control was, in the eyes of many, more reflective of the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union than it was of any joint desires for cooperation. Arms control did, however, remain an endeavour which was eagerly pursued between the two for the most part, for whatever the reasons. With the relatively recent revolutionary changes and initiatives of Soviet and Russian Presidents Gorbachev and Yeltsin, the ending of the Cold War between the superpowers (which was partly a product of this, and of the emergence of intensified economic concerns and crises, especially in the former Soviet Union (FSU)), strategic arms control had moved to the forefront of the arms control agenda by the outset of the 1990s, this time in the form of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START). With treaties in the areas of intermediate nuclear forces (INF) and conventional forces in Europe (CFE), strategic arms constituted one of the few categories of weaponry that had remained relatively unresolved throughout the 1980s.

I

The pursuit of strategic stability as an optimal condition has been perhaps the primary organizing principle of US arms control policy and nuclear strategy since the decline in US strategic superiority over the USSR began in the late 1950s. It has been a concern of the US since the beginning of the bilateral nuclear relationship between the

United States and the Soviet Union. Since a stable strategic balance¹ is believed to result when each side is in possession of a secure retaliatory force, the strategic situation in the 1950s was viewed as somewhat unstable. At this time the USSR relied on the threat of a surprise pre-emptive strategic attack to deter the United States, given that it did not possess a sufficient retaliatory capability. By the time Soviet strategic forces had grown and improved in quality throughout the 1970s to the point where they had surpassed the US in quantity, the situation was once again perceived as an unstable one, for many in the United States argued that this Soviet strategic superiority had been responsible for the creation of a 'window of vulnerability' in the land-based leg of the US strategic arsenal. It was believed that such a position of superiority would confer considerable bargaining leverage upon the USSR in a time of crisis, and that the US would be forced to adopt destabilizing policies such as 'launch on warning' to offset this adverse situation, much as the Soviet Union had been forced to do a few decades earlier.²

Generally, stability has been viewed as constituting both arms race and crisis stability. Arms race stability refers to the condition whereby neither side in an arms competition will pursue military postures or deployments in pursuit of a major advantage over the other side, mainly because such an advantage is usually judged to be unattainable.³ This type of stability is based on the assumption that arms racing results from the reciprocal fear of the adversary launching a first-strike and thereby hindering

¹A strategic balance between two states might be defined as a situation "in which each possesses strategic nuclear forces that can threaten the other with a degree of destruction sufficient to ensure that a deliberate attack would not be a rational act of policy." Hedley Bull, "The Scope for Super Power Agreements," in Hedley Bull on Arms Control (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 75.

²Paul Buteux, "The Theory and Practice of Deterrence," in David G. Haglund and Michael K. Hawes (eds) World Politics: Power, Interdependence and Dependence (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada, Inc., 1990), p. 91.

³Colin Gray, "Strategic Stability Reconsidered," Daedalus, Vol. 109, No. 4, Fall 1980, p. 135.

the other side from responding with a satisfactory retaliatory attack. Thus, an arms 'race' that is stable is one where neither side pursues programs or systems that would have the negative effect of calling into question the assured destruction capability of the other. Based on the action-reaction dynamic, arms race stability theory assumes that neither side will feel pressured to stockpile more nuclear weapons than are required to maintain assured destruction.

Crisis stability, on the other hand, refers to the condition wherein "the very character, readiness, and mobilization procedures of armed forces in confrontation should not themselves comprise the proximate cause of war."⁴ The focus is usually on the technological dimensions of weaponry, although crisis stability refers to any military actions, plans, or doctrines that influence the movement towards war. In a situation of crisis stability, no advantage to striking first can be gained from the force structures of either side. Neither feels the need to "use or lose" its weapons.⁵ The notion of crisis stability is also included in the concept of first-strike stability, which, unlike crisis stability, accounts for the possibility of a "bolt from the blue" attack - one that is not precipitated by a crisis.⁶

The concept of first-strike stability tends to be very structural in nature, as it is primarily concerned with the technical dimensions of weapons and weapons systems and on the force structures that they comprise. For this condition to obtain, strategic forces must possess the dual qualities of being survivable enough so as not to present an

⁴Ibid., p. 146.

⁵Kerry M. Kartchner, Negotiating START: Strategic Arms Reduction Talks and the Quest For Strategic Stability (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), p. 3.

⁶For the purposes of this study, any future reference to first-strike stability will include the criteria of crisis stability as outlined in the preceding paragraphs.

attractive and inviting target to a potential adversary, and not possessing the capability to carry out a preemptive attack on the retaliatory forces of the other side.⁷

In the United States, the initial theoretical focus of arms control was on what is now known as first-strike stability. This resulted from studies that determined that US strategic forces were vulnerable to a Soviet surprise attack, the most notable of these being Albert Wohlstetter's.⁸ These concerns were intensified with the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik, which demonstrated an impressive and surprising Soviet intercontinental capability. The continued development of Soviet strategic forces led to US concerns that a "missile gap" was developing between the superpowers. However, this buildup had the effect of stimulating US modernization programs, many of which were reaching their fruition in the early 1960s. With developments in this area, US fears of a missile gap dissipated, as did concerns over a possible Soviet surprise attack.⁹ In the belief that the USSR had ceded strategic superiority to the United States, American concerns temporarily subsided, for consensus seemed to indicate that the USSR was not prepared to allocate the resources necessary for it to "catch up" to the US.

US fears were to intensify once again in the mid-1960s, as it became clear that the Soviet Union was intent on challenging American nuclear superiority, if not eliminating it altogether. Arms race stability thus became the central US objective from this point on. As Kerry Kartchner has documented, US strategic nuclear delivery vehicle (SNDV) levels reached their apex in 1967 and remained relatively constant for the next several years. US deliverable megatonnage actually declined sharply because of the shift from gravity bombs to missile warheads in the US force structure. By way of contrast,

⁷Kartchner, p. 4.

⁸Wohlstetter's study was outlined in his essay entitled "The Delicate Balance of Terror," which appeared in the January 1959 issue of Foreign Affairs.

⁹Kartchner, p. 4.

the pace of Soviet modernization programs continued unabated. Between 1967 and 1972 the Soviet Union's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) force more than quadrupled in size, from 450 to 2024, while the US missile force remained at 1710.¹⁰ At this point, the US began to develop more elaborate theories of arms race stability.

The onset of these adverse trends in the Soviet-American relationship had, by this time, given the United States cause for concern. Not only were Soviet modernization programs progressing at an impressive pace, but they were now beginning to influence thinking in the US. With the pace of US modernization programs reaching a plateau in this decade, and with the ongoing nature of Soviet development, options to offset these disturbing trends had to be found. It was at this point that strategic arms control made the shift to an actual policy option from its previous status as a theoretical construct.

II

As reflected in its theoretical formulation in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the primary objectives of arms control have been the reduction of the likelihood of nuclear war; the reduction in the severity of such a war if it could not be prevented; the constraining of the strategic nuclear arms race; and the promotion of what have been referred to as the wider goals of arms control, such as the discouraging of the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.¹¹ Hedley Bull has provided an innocuous and yet effective definition of the concept: "Arms control in its broadest sense comprises all

¹⁰Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹Bull, "The Scope for Super Power Agreements," p. 86.

those acts of military policy in which antagonistic states cooperate in the pursuit of common purposes even while they are struggling in the pursuit of conflicting ones.”¹²

Bull has identified five key ideas that were central to the approach to arms control and disarmament developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s. First, arms control and disarmament were not ends in themselves, but rather means to the end of enhanced security. It was also important that arms control was founded on the area where it was believed that the US and the USSR shared common interests. Third, defence and arms control were not opposite ends of policy, and should be in harmony given that they are both aimed at enhancing security. Fourth, arms control was a broader area of military policy than simply that which constituted the realization of formal agreements. Perhaps the most important goal of arms control was determined to be the stabilization of the mutual deterrent relationship between the superpowers.¹³

Arms control was able to remain a vital process even under the condition of mutual assured destruction (MAD), for, even in times when the superpowers were pursuing maximal deterrent postures, there remained a shared interest in avoiding war. In this sense, arms control served as a means of rechanneling the arms dynamic towards the maintenance of the military status quo, preferably at lower levels of armament, yet ones at which assured destruction capabilities would remain intact.¹⁴

¹²Hedley Bull, “Arms Control and World Order,” in Hedley Bull on Arms Control (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), p. 192.

¹³Hedley Bull, “The Classical Approach to Arms Control Twenty Three Years Later,” in *ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁴‘Assured destruction’ was a concept first used in 1964 by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that was defined as the ability to “deter a deliberate nuclear attack on the United States or its allies by maintaining at all times a clear and unmistakable ability to inflict an unacceptable degree of damage upon any aggressor, or combination of aggressors - even after absorbing a surprise first-strike.” Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, How Much is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program 1961-1969 (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 174.

While the terms 'arms control' and 'disarmament' are often used interchangeably, the concepts differ in their fundamental purpose. While the goal of disarmament and its advocates has been and will remain the elimination of all weapons, arms controllers, both less ambitiously and more realistically, seek only to improve the ability to manage their development and deployment. As John Garnett puts it, "Disarmament seeks safety from arms, while arms control seeks safety through them."¹⁵ The former mistakes symptom (the weapons themselves) for cause (which is actually attributable to the anarchic nature of the international system). Arms control is thus the more rational and realistic course of action. Rather than advocating the revolutionary transformation of the international system, as do supporters of general and complete disarmament (GCD), arms controllers, in a more evolutionary approach, seek to make the best of the system as it exists in its present form, only seeking to make minor adjustments to it in order to allow it to operate more efficiently.

The concept of arms control arose with the desire to achieve or maintain three basic objectives. First, the general level of armaments was to be reduced, however one goes about measuring it.¹⁶ Second, some sufficient balance needed to be maintained between the negotiating parties for this process to be successful. Finally, 'stability' was to be pursued - a situation being deemed stable when political and technological forces, in addition to misunderstandings, accidents, and crises are unlikely to sufficiently affect the incentives of any nation so as to contribute to the failure of deterrence.¹⁷

¹⁵John Garnett, "Disarmament and Arms Control Since 1945," in Laurence Martin (ed), Strategic Thought in the Nuclear Age (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 191.

¹⁶This objective has not always been acknowledged as the primary one of arms control, but it is recurrent in the theoretical literature. In the early 1960s, many identified arms control as an offshoot of disarmament, which might explain the emphasis on the idea of reductions in weaponry.

¹⁷Thomas C. Schelling and Morton H. Halperin, Strategy and Arms Control (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1961), p. 50.

III

Both arms control and disarmament are the victims of fallacious interpretation. Such erroneous readings of the process of disarmament tend to be more frequent, and also more politically naive, than those of arms control. The notion of disarmament, especially one of a general and complete disarmament (GCD), is entirely at odds with the anarchical structure of the international system. Only the presence of some form of world government would enable the implementing of such a sweeping reform; and one could argue even then that such a world would need to remain armed to some degree to prevent any renegade states from violating any GCD agreement, since the incentive to cheat (and the significance of such an action) increases as the level of armaments declines. Since any such notion of a global authority is accepted as well-nigh impossible to achieve, so too remain those of a GCD. Furthermore, as those such as Buzan argue, the presence of both status-quo and revisionist powers in the present system will justify the possession of instruments of war so long as the system remains anarchic in nature. These intrastate rivalries remain as one of the major impediments to grand illusions of sweeping disarmament initiatives.¹⁸

Notions of complete disarmament, and even ones of substantive reductions which stop short of this end, are not compatible with the maintenance of stability and order in the international system for several reasons. First of all, any such efforts would serve only to magnify the importance of any violations of an agreement - the possession or development of even a few nuclear weapons in a situation of vastly reduced or even decimated arsenals would thusly have the potential to be incredibly destabilizing. Large reductions, by creating concern about the survivability of forces or by generating

¹⁸Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), p. 202.

tensions within the NATO alliance (because of the apparent decoupling of the strategic forces of the United States from the defence of Western Europe) could, in turn, impel governments to question the stability of the strategic balance and the efficacy of deterrence. Furthermore, resort to rearmament would always remain a possibility, for the nuclear genie cannot be forced back into its bottle, and the prevention of such a situation from arising would be, for all intents and purposes, nearly impossible. In this sense, a totally disarmed world could very possibly be much more dangerous and unstable than one that is highly armed.

As regards arms control, perhaps the most fundamental misunderstanding attributable to both arms controllers and the general public alike, upon the realization of an arms control agreement, is that which Edward Luttwak has illustrated:

The error hidden in the wake of such success is to misconstrue the diversion of conflictual energies as a partial solution to the conflict itself, thereby suggesting that a progression of further partial agreements might bring the conflict to an end. Thus arms control negotiations are often interpreted as a form of conflict resolution, whereas they only affect a symptom of the conflict, namely the derived military competition.¹⁹

This sentiment was illustrative of one of the greatest misperceptions of the process of arms control: that formalized agreements in themselves could bring about the cessation of the Soviet-American competition and the Cold War in which it was manifested. Arms control was still being confused with disarmament. The former is designed to address the main symptom of the anarchic international system - the possession by states of arsenals of destruction - and not to revolutionize the nature of the system itself.

In the past, only the advocates of GCD could be accused of such misguided interpretations of the arms control process. However, with the increased politization of

¹⁹Edward N. Luttwak, Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 186.

what should be a largely militarily motivated process, which began with the publicity which accompanied the SALT negotiations and agreements, even advocates of arms control are becoming increasingly guilty of misperceiving the nature of the international system. Ignorance of its anarchic structure leads to mistaken perceptions of the process as an end in itself. It is in fact much less than this - it is merely a means of attempting to manage the arms dynamic that is a product of a system of such a nature.²⁰

Many aspects of the arms control process raise the question as to whether it ultimately addresses or solves as many problems as it inevitably creates. Several byproducts of the negotiation process also fuel this argument. As some have argued, the actual negotiation process itself might have somewhat of a placebo effect, to the extent that agreements which result are often ones which merely prohibit the pursuit of systems or areas in which neither side is interested anyway.²¹ Thus, central issues often remain unaddressed. Although the general public is often reassured by such agreements, the arms dynamic continues unabated. Similarly, it seems that the very act of negotiating has become an end in itself, regardless of the military significance of the issues being addressed. This is the downside to an endeavour which needs to be both

²⁰Of course, the political dimension of arms control is much less straightforward than its military-strategic one. Nuclear weapons serve not only deterrent purposes, but compellent ones as well. They are normally utilized in such a manner in order to further a state's foreign policy objectives, and arms control has frequently been used as a means to such ends. For example, arms control proposals are often designed so as to be unacceptable to the other party. In so doing, the onus is shifted to the opponent, who must then deal with the psychological and political ramifications of rejecting what might seem as a perfectly acceptable proposal. In contrast to deterrence, compellence thus "implies an effort to alter a status quo situation, and arms control can theoretically be used to change the existing balance of forces." Arms control was part of an overall strategic relationship, with both the United States and the Soviet Union seeking to constrain the political and military options of the other. Like any other inherently political process, arms control can be utilized to achieve certain political aims. K. R. Pennie, Analysis of Superpower Nuclear Strategy: Compellence as a Competing Paradigm to that of Deterrence. Unpublished dissertation, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 1989, p. 69.

²¹Robert Neild, "The Case Against Arms Control Negotiations and For a Reconsideration of Strategy," Arms Control, Vol. 7, No. 2, September 1986, p. 150.

military and political in character. Unfortunately, although political considerations must be predominant, the almost entirely political nature of the SALT negotiations served to subvert and overshadow the important military and strategic dimensions which must be part of the process of arms control. Furthermore, negotiation might, paradoxically, contribute to increased levels of competition, for the focus on specific categories of weaponry often leads to excessive levels of scrutiny and verification, in addition to the problems posed by the mass proliferation of propaganda by either side. Bargaining chip behavior is often the result, illustrative of the vicious circle of which arms control is a part.

A major obstacle that has hindered the arms control process and contributed to the less than impressive arms control and disarmament record has been referred to as the 'technological imperative'. As Buzan has observed, the continual development of novel weapons systems cannot be separated from the broader process of technological evolution. As a result of this, "both arms control and disarmament must run in order to stand still."²² Furthermore, since a demand for weaponry will always exist, as argued above, the demand will be for the best possible weapons, given available resources. These factors serve to hinder any efforts at arms control or disarmament. The former, in particular, is often driven and influenced by the technical and qualitative specifics which might exist at the time. Because of this, qualitative changes, however insignificant in nature, still serve to render any such agreement that much more irrelevant (at least in the military sense) and anachronistic. For example, while the initial SALT agreement of 1972 set specific quantitative ceilings on the numbers of launchers allowed on each side, the development of the Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle (MIRV) served to render any such restrictions relatively meaningless.

²²Buzan, p. 202.

The tide of technological change has led to difficulties in other areas of arms control, such as increased political strains, limits to verification, and the emergence of multi-mission or 'grey-area' systems. Regarding political strains, Christoph Bertram has argued that arms control agreements can only possess symbolic, political significance if they are deemed to be fair and equitable by both parties.²³ Because of the rapidity of technological development and the inherent difficulty in incorporating it into an agreement, it has become almost impossible to reach agreements that are deemed acceptable by each side. Qualitative improvements on both sides serve to circumvent any technical controls in the agreement.

Another of the central problems of arms control relates to the cheating that could potentially occur, most likely resulting from increased insecurity over arms limitations or reductions. With a state's military capabilities decreasing through such measures, it comes to rely on verification and compliance to ensure that balance and equality is maintained.²⁴ The further toward disarmament that a state proceeds, the greater the reliance on verification to ensure compliance on behalf of the other parties to the agreement.

Since absolute verification is not always possible, cheating is often a threat and risk to any parties to an arms control agreement. When relations are strained, as they were between the superpowers during the Cold War, only a high certainty of compliance will be sufficient to reassure a state that the other party is not violating the agreement. However, the intrusive verification measures that are often required to provide this

²³Christoph Bertram, "Beyond SALT II," Adelphi Paper No. 141, (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1978).

²⁴Verification is usually achieved through either national technical means (NTM), which include aerial reconnaissance photographs from satellites and aircraft, or more intrusive measures, which involve personal inspection of the treaty-bound weapons system.

reassurance are frequently deemed politically unacceptable to the other side.²⁵ The United States and the Soviet Union were at various points accused by one another of violating the SALT agreements. Some of these accusations have been justified.²⁶ However, since these agreements did not actually reduce strategic arsenals and therefore had little significant impact on the strategic forces of either side, and because they were by nature inherently political, some amount of cheating was deemed tolerable without one side abrogating the agreement. It is only when states take steps towards actual reductions in strategic armaments that cheating becomes of crucial significance. With the shrinking of nuclear arsenals come concerns about the effect of reductions on the requirements of such strategies as extended deterrence.

Technical constraints also pose difficulties for verification, for military innovations are becoming less and less observable and hence less verifiable. If verifiability becomes increasingly difficult, fewer reductions can be agreed upon, and any such agreements reached in this manner become more and more irrelevant. In a similar vein, new weaponry is increasingly defying traditional classification schemes. The development of such grey area or multi-mission systems can then be seen as "rapidly eroding the link between restrictions by category and curtailment of military performance."²⁷ Most missions can now be carried out by other, unrestrained systems. While a concept such as verification can seem to most as inherently beneficial, if taken to its logical extreme (as with any other strategic procedure), it could be seen as negatively

²⁵Barry Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies: Military Technology and International Relations (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 264.

²⁶The Soviet deployment of a phased-array radar system at Krasnoyarsk was almost universally acknowledged to be a violation of the ABM treaty of 1972.

²⁷Christoph Bertram, "Arms Control and Technological Change: Elements of a New Approach," Adelphi Paper No. 146, (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1978), p. 4.

influencing the arms control process, and thus the national security interests of a state.

As Edward Luttwak has commented:

If all obstacles are overcome and arms control treaties are duly negotiated to constrain all that can be constrained with adequate verification, the ironical result might be to displace the strategic competition from the large weapons of classic form that are easily identified and counted, to weapons that have neither attribute.²⁸

Another reason that arms control and disarmament have been more attractive in theory than in practice is attributable to the imbalances in military power amongst the states which comprise the international system. As long as these disparities exist, and the system remains one of a self-help nature, security will continue to be pursued in a manner which is perceived by other states as offensive and destabilizing in nature, thus fueling the security dilemma.²⁹ In this sense, the search for security is very much a zero-sum game. The security gains of one are seen as jeopardizing the national security of others.³⁰ However, in recent years those such as Jervis have demonstrated that cooperation is possible under the security dilemma in certain situations. Combining international security theory with the newer information on regimes and international political economic theory, some have argued that, even in the absence of formalized institutions or agreements, common principles, rules and norms can be adopted by adversaries.³¹

²⁸Edward N. Luttwak, "Why Arms Control Has Failed," Commentary, Vol. 65, No. 1, January 1978, p. 22.

²⁹The concept of the 'security dilemma' was developed by John Herz in the early 1950s to describe the situation wherein states, acting in their self-interest to improve their national security needs, unwittingly contribute to the insecurity of other states because the measures taken are perceived as threatening or offensive in nature by others. Each state considers its own actions to be defensive in nature, but those of others are usually viewed as unnecessarily provocative. See Buzan, People, States and Fear, p. 3.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 203.

³¹See, for example, Robert Jervis, The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 57-67.

By the end of the 1980s the United States had reached the point where the SALT method of arms control, with its predominantly quantitative focus, had become increasingly complicated by the qualitative nature of technological progress as it affected weapons development so that, unfortunately, "arms control [was] separated from military security, which [was] unfortunate for both."³² Since the SALT agreement of 1972, the shift has been away from any emphasis on the qualitative nature of weapons and towards almost exclusive concentration on numbers, although this did change somewhat with the onset of the START negotiations. Also, the trend had been to focus on specific categories of weaponry, which was problematic for two reasons. First, truly strategic concerns, such as those of vulnerability or retaliatory capability, were given less attention than before. In addition, the onrushing pace of technological development led to the emergence of grey area systems which, because of their multi-mission nature, defied attempts at classification into traditional categories, rendering any such efforts difficult and also problematic. A more credible approach to arms control was advocated by the likes of Garnett, who argued for the pursuit of 'option' rather than numerical symmetry.³³ Seeking equivalence in capabilities seemed to be the best avenue of approach when pursuing substantive arms control agreements.

IV

The process of arms control, when understood in the context from which it emerged, can be seen as much more conducive to political concerns rather than those of a military nature. Its emergence as a process resulted after the onset of the period of detente in the Cold War relationship between the superpowers. It is important to

³²Bertram, "Beyond SALT II," p. 1.

³³Garnett, p. 194.

remember that it is a product of this political climate. The SALT treaty of 1972 is hailed as the agreement which formalized American acceptance of the USSR as a superpower and 'equal' - the latter more so in the eyes of the Soviet Union than in those of the United States. Because this was the case, arms control came to acquire a certain political value as a means of managing the relationship between the US and the USSR, and also formed the basis for communication between them at a time when relations were somewhat strained. It is in this sense that one can argue that strategic arms control was viewed as much more of an area of political rather than military concern. Thus, the perception of arms control concerns and initiatives as being separate and distinct from those of the military establishment has meant that national security objectives may not be in conjunction with those of a politically-oriented arms control process, and vice versa. This phenomenon evolved to the point where the political demands of the arms control process required that an agreement be politically and publicly appealing in order for it to be palatable. Hence, a truly substantive treaty, one of significant military utility, was not likely to garner much public or media attention.³⁴ In an age where highly symbolic and political agreements seemed to be the desired end, such potentially significant agreements were not likely to be reached by the superpowers.

After the rise of detente and the American shift to a more political approach to arms control, the treaties that were signed in the late 1960s and early 1970s became increasingly devoid of military orientation. The arms dynamic was not curtailed by the Partial Test Ban (PTB) Treaty, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), or either of the SALT agreements of 1972 or 1979 (the latter of which was never ratified but roughly adhered to by both superpowers for some time). As Robin Ranger has observed, the elaboration of the political dimension of arms control led to the loosening of technical

³⁴Kenneth L. Adelman, "Arms Control With and Without Agreements," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 63, No. 3, Winter 1984-85, p. 263.

requirements for restraint in order to facilitate improved superpower relations. Perhaps more importantly, by the time of the birth of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) in 1961, it was already evident that it was becoming increasingly difficult "to question the idea of regulating military technology and competition so as to maximize strategic stability without seeming to attack the most significant supporters of detente."³⁵

One can thus argue that arms control has evolved into more of a process designed for public and political consumption than as a means of redressing areas of military and strategic concern. Because leaks regarding the substance and progress of arms control negotiations tend to sabotage the chances of success for any such agreement, at least in regard to its military dimension, it follows that such discussions should take place as far removed from the public eye as possible, as the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) remained for the most part. This way, public and political influences, which usually lead to agreements more symbolic than substantive in nature, may submit to greater consideration of military-strategic concerns. As Kenneth Adelman has written, "Public fanfare invariably leads to dashed hopes and deepening suspicions that the endeavour is being transformed from one primarily of strategic significance to one primarily of public relations."³⁶ This view of arms control negotiations is more likely than not the result of the SALT process of the 1970s. By their very nature, both SALT agreements were inherently political in that they became the flagship of the political detente between the superpowers at that time. However, whatever strategic significance they might have contained became lost amidst political fanfare and increasing expectations, and any

³⁵Robin Ranger, Arms and Politics 1958-1978: Arms Control in a Changing Political Context (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1979), p. 21.

³⁶Adelman, p. 243.

militarily important dimensions that SALT I and II might have or did in fact contain were either preempted or largely overshadowed by this.

Because strategic arms control is designed to manage and not to resolve conflict, it became part of the overall Soviet-American rivalry during the Cold War, as those such as Buzan have argued. Hence, arms control negotiations had a tendency to become propaganda forums where each side attempted to demonstrate its strengths while at the same time revealing the weaknesses of the other. Substance became lost in the shuffle. In Buzan's words, "concessions are easily seen as a sign of weakness (in terms of inability or lack of will to compete in the arms dynamic) rather than as expressions of a desire to achieve joint gains."³⁷ The original theoretical objectives of arms control had been further buried by the heightened superpower competition, and the process was becoming more of a means of waging various propaganda wars than one of stabilizing the arms dynamic.

Given the competitive nature of the arms dynamic, in addition to the affecting of national policy by arms control negotiations and agreements, arms control both influences and is influenced by domestic-political considerations. It is often argued that negotiations must be undertaken from positions of strength, and for such a situation to exist, newer and more technologically advanced weapons systems are required for purposes of bargaining leverage. If a side does not possess such leverage, it risks being easily outmaneuvered by an opponent that has more to concede at the arms control table. Once initiated, novel weapons programs often gain a certain momentum or acquire a 'bureaucratic inertia' of their own and become increasingly difficult to halt. One might go so far as to argue that systems have likely been developed because of their potential for helping to achieve leverage or progress at arms control forums. Arms control negotiations, which tend to proceed characteristically slowly, often fall behind the

³⁷Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies, p. 269.

onrushing pace of technology. The result is arms 'control' in fact stimulating the arms dynamic rather than helping to slow its' pace.³⁸

It is in this way that arms control itself, paradoxically, can be used to justify the acquisition of new weaponry. In the pursuit of bargaining leverage, novel systems come to acquire a value above and beyond their military utility - they are a valuable political tool for obvious negotiating purposes, for they can be traded for adversarial concessions. Thus, defence programs are no longer justified strictly according to strategic or budgetary considerations - they are now evaluated according to their potential utility to any present or future negotiations. The MX and cruise missiles serve as examples of such "treaty weapons."³⁹ Thus, as Colin Gray points out, arms control processes "are as likely to constrain the wrong (ie, ultimately stabilizing) as the right (ie, ultimately destabilizing) defence technologies - given human frailty in strategic prediction."⁴⁰ It can be seen that, while arms control may or may not serve to slow the speed of the arms dynamic, it definitely cannot stop it. Indeed, in pursuit of bargaining leverage, arms control seems to become hostage to the arms race itself. In this way, efforts at arms control can be seen as contributing to the arms dynamic rather than hindering its progression. Arms control then becomes little more than "a closed cycle of

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹As Jonathan Haslam has documented, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger viewed cruise missile technology as a bargaining chip for the SALT II negotiations, and it was pursued for this reason. See Jonathan Haslam, The Soviet Union and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons in Europe, 1969-87 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 60, 65. Similarly, US Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger justified the development and deployment of the MX missile as a means of getting the Soviet Union to accept throwweight limits in SALT. His interest in MX was as "a bargaining chip for arms control," and he "hoped that [the US] wouldn't have to deploy it." Gregg Herken, Counsels of War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 264-265.

⁴⁰Gray, "Strategic Stability Reconsidered," p. 145.

futility...demonstrating the political power of an arms race that has become internalized.”⁴¹

Arguments regarding the impact of arms control efforts on the military programs of the United States take two basic forms. The first is that arms control agreements have a certain ‘lulling effect’, causing the US to spend less on defence programs than national security concerns would require. The contrasting view is that arms control does not reduce spending, research, or development, but rather stimulates it through the initiation of often unnecessary military programs, essentially rechanneling the arms dynamic into other areas.⁴² Regardless of which of these views possesses the greatest merit, the obvious conclusion to be drawn is that arms control, in each case, may not only lead to questionable programs and practices, but also to postures that simply jeopardize strategic stability. Although there exists more evidence in support of the latter argument, the lack of such for the lulling-effect theory may be attributable to concerns over such an effect actually resulting from an agreement so as to lead to efforts to compensate for it, much like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Indeed, the SALT agreements, as Sean Lynn-Jones has observed, were accompanied by heightened military expenditures and programs.⁴³ Also, government and military leaders have seemingly attempted to prevent the American public from becoming overconfident regarding US security upon the realization of agreements by pointing out the limits to them and to the necessity of a continued military effort. As Lynn-Jones sees it, “It may be that the prominence of the

⁴¹Buzan, People, States and Fear, p. 203.

⁴²Sean M. Lynn-Jones, “Lulling and Stimulating Effects of Arms Control,” in Albert Carnesale and Richard Haass (eds), Superpower Arms Control: Setting the Record Straight (Cambridge: Harper & Row, Inc., 1987), p. 223.

⁴³*ibid.*

lulling-effect argument has prompted such a compensatory response that arms control agreements have accelerated US military spending.”⁴⁴

V

Arms control came to bear a huge burden in the US-Soviet relationship. In the midst of the Cold War that developed after the Second World War and throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the relationship between the two might be described as a primarily strategic one. With political detente in the 1970s, arms control became more than a means of addressing military instability - it was a means of political communication between two bitter rivals at a time of great tension and conflict. Thus, arms control came to have a significance above and beyond its purely technical and military dimensions.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the United States, strategically superior to its Soviet counterpart, found it relatively easier to defend its allies and interests in Western Europe than it did in the following decades. Although beginning an impressive rearmament effort in the 1950s, the US had to do little to offset the military power of the Soviet Union on the Eurasian continent. However, with the gradual achievement of nuclear parity by the USSR, and the onset of the condition of mutual assured destruction, defending Europe became much more of a challenge to the US. Indeed, the emergent nuclear bipolarity that arose in the 1970s was likely the greatest factor in the shifts in US doctrine that occurred in the decades that followed: ‘flexible response’ in the 1960s and ‘limited nuclear options’ in the 1970s.

It was thus obvious that US Alliance commitments came to be one of the chief influences on the shape of the US strategic posture. Deterring the Soviet Union in Europe now became a much more complicated task. A minimal deterrence posture, although

⁴⁴Ibid.

never pursued, might have sufficed when the US was in a position of strategic superiority in regard to its Soviet counterpart, but such a strategic posture was no longer possible with the onset of strategic parity between the superpowers. This development would radically shift the nuclear balance and forever complicate the contradictory US goals of deterring an attack on its territory while also maintaining the status quo in Europe. The first was relatively easy to achieve, and the deterrent posture of the US had been adequate for this previously. However, the onset of parity by the USSR would force the US into a search for the appropriate strategic doctrine(s), a search that one might argue was never successfully completed. Achieving and maintaining its security objectives from this point on would be much more difficult for the United States.

Underlying the shape of the US force structure and affiliated doctrine was the problem of the deterrent posture that was to be pursued. Two orthodox schools of view concerning deterrence emerged from the so-called Golden Age of US strategic theory: the 'easy' and 'difficult' schools of deterrence. Those members of the US strategic community that adhere to the 'deterrence is easy' school, like their counterparts in the 'difficult' school, believe that the potential costs of aggression outweigh any possible gains that the deterree might accrue. They focus on the inherent uncertainty of the deterree in obtaining its objectives without paying a hefty price. In contrast to this school, those who believe that deterrence is more difficult realize the possibility of what Barry Buzan has termed "aggressive deterrees."⁴⁵ However, they are also cognizant of the significant relationship between costs and risks. Any adversary will calculate the risks involved in an act of military aggression. Thus, even if the costs of aggression outweigh the potential gains, military aggression might be deemed worthwhile if the probability that the costs will be inflicted is low.

⁴⁵Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies, p. 169.

If deterrence is 'easy', then some form of minimal nuclear deterrent, perhaps as small as a few hundred warheads, will be sufficient to deter. The credibility of the deterrent rests in the threatened costs of aggression. This school rests on the assumption that the adversary's uncertainty (whether it will be punished or not) will act as the deterrent. Nuclear weapons make it easy to create such uncertainty.⁴⁶ If deterrence is believed to be 'difficult', then policy requires not only the capability to threaten high costs, but also the taking of measures to persuade the opponent that the risks are indeed very high. To deter effectively in such a situation, risks must be kept high. This means that expanded conventional and/or nuclear arsenals are necessary in order to give the deterrer a range of denial and retaliatory options.

The assumptions of the 'difficult' school of deterrence are the ones that the United States adopted in order to keep the Soviet Union from entertaining ideas of initiating a blitzkrieg into Western Europe. Advocates of the 'easy' school (who advocate existential deterrence⁴⁷ postures) failed to realize that this position ignored key political dimensions, the most important being that it was not acceptable to members of the Alliance. For extended deterrence, a US nuclear 'umbrella' was required. Nothing less would suffice, either in the military-strategic sense or in the political one. Unfortunately for the United States, the Soviet Union was also pursuing the 'difficult' path of deterrence, as it was in the process of developing a so-called 'warfighting' strategy by the 1980s. Since both sides were committed to maximal deterrent postures in this decade, their pursuit of increased options meant that the avenues of potential success for arms control had been narrowed considerably. As Buzan has stated, arms

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 171.

⁴⁷'Existential deterrence' is a term coined by McGeorge Bundy in the 1980s which is based on the assumption that nuclear weapons have transformed the nature of international and military relations. It reflects the idea that, as long as nuclear arsenals exist that are large enough to withstand first-strikes against them, then details such as strategies for nuclear employment or methods of deployment are of little consequence.

control under these conditions usually amounted to little more than “continuing to talk, and to keeping high levels of maintenance of the military status quo from drifting into arms racing.”⁴⁸ With this in mind, it is less than surprising that the two superpowers had much trouble in negotiating any type of strategic arms control agreements, and that these agreements served more as indicators of reassurance and predictability between hostile competitors than as substantive achievements geared towards enhancing stability.

While the achievement of formalized strategic arms control agreements might have been difficult to obtain, literature does exist that indicates that other significant products of the arms control process have resulted from joint efforts by the US and USSR in this area. Hedley Bull has argued that the political detente between the superpowers in the 1970s was based on a narrow area of common interests between them, such as the avoidance of nuclear war, the avoidance of direct military confrontation with one another and of interference in each other’s spheres of influence, and the mutual desire to contain conflicts.⁴⁹ Joseph Nye has expanded on this theme and also shown that arms control serves a myriad of functions. Specifically, he has argued that, through the arms control process, nuclear learning takes place.⁵⁰ Nye applied the concept of cognitive change or learning to the US-Soviet relationship, and argued that learning takes place on the international level when new information or knowledge is used to redefine or modify the national interest of a state. Since the advent of nuclear weapons, new information about them and experience gained through their handling have, according to Nye, served to alter prior-held beliefs.⁵¹ In certain areas, there developed “a core of consensual knowledge”

⁴⁸Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies, p. 261.

⁴⁹Bull, “The Scope for Super Power Agreements,” p. 72.

⁵⁰Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Nuclear Learning and US-Soviet Security Regimes,” International Organization, Vol. 41, No. 3, Summer 1987.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 382.

that both nations shared. As concepts and beliefs that both sides have learned, Nye lists the following: the destructive power of nuclear weapons; the managing of their command and control and the dangers of nuclear escalation; knowledge in regard to the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons; the nature of the arms dynamic; and the requirements for deterrence, in addition to others.⁵²

Two distinct forms of deterrence play key roles in the maintenance of US national security interests. 'Central deterrence' is the condition which exists when an enemy is deterred from attacking central territory, for the purposes of this examination the continental United States. It is "the relationship between vital objectives whose very centrality guarantees them the highest value to the deterrer and therefore guarantees also the willingness to run the highest risks of retaliation or pre-emption on their behalf as well as the will to inflict a level of harm commensurate with the necessity to protect those objectives."⁵³ Extended deterrence, on the other hand, is the projection of nuclear deterrence into theatres beyond the central, for this study that of Western Europe. While both types are similar in that they link political objectives to nuclear strategies, they require quite different strategic forces and force postures in order to support them.

Prior to the early 1950s the United States was invulnerable to a Soviet attack, and therefore could treat an attack on Western Europe much as it would an attack on its own territory. American territory was not at risk. The US commitment to defend its allies in the European theatre was quite simple and straightforward. However, with the gradual development of the Soviet strategic bomber force and the attendant onset of strategic bipolarity, this became a much more complicated task. An attack on Europe could no longer be treated as an attack on US territory, for the US was now vulnerable to

⁵²Ibid., pp. 382-383.

⁵³Philip Bobbitt, Democracy and Deterrence: The History and Future of Nuclear Strategy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 9.

a retaliatory attack by the USSR. As Philip Bobbitt saw it, "It was at this point that extended deterrence came into being in the space evacuated by the shrinking of those interests for which the United States was willing to launch its nuclear weapons without calculation."⁵⁴

To defend Europe in the era of strategic equality between the superpowers, the United States had to decide between conventional and nuclear deterrence. The problem with a purely conventional strategy was that it would have been difficult to demonstrate why the USSR should be deterred from an incursion into Western territory, given its conventional superiority in the European theatre. However, this was ruled out as an option, as neither the US nor the Alliance was prepared to match Soviet conventional strength on the European continent. The security of Western Europe would have to be ensured through other means. The problem with a nuclear defence of Europe was that it would be difficult for the United States to convince the USSR (and its colleagues in the Alliance, for that matter) that it was willing to initiate a nuclear war over a conventional invasion of Europe.⁵⁵ In simple terms, the question became one of whether the US was prepared to "sacrifice Chicago for Frankfurt." The United States had to either find some optimal mix of both types of deterrence or take the steps necessary to extend the nuclear umbrella to Western Europe.

The basic problem that was posed to the US by this problem of extended deterrence was that the strategic posture required by MAD was not sufficient for extended deterrence requirements. A full-scale attack on a Soviet Union that had invaded Western Europe would only invite Soviet retaliation and therefore initiate a central strategic war. Thus, the Soviet acquisition of strategic nuclear parity forced the US to develop doctrines of

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁵Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), p. 290.

limited war and increased and more flexible nuclear options in order to make its deterrent threat more credible and to emphasize the linkage between the strategic nuclear forces of the United States and the defence of Europe. MAD only threatened deterrence by punishment, which in an age of parity meant mutual annihilation. Strategies consisting of increased and more flexible options which would enable the US to fight protracted and limited nuclear wars (so-called 'warfighting' strategies) were therefore pursued by the US in order to enhance the extended deterrence commitment and to deter the USSR from thinking that it could achieve victory through a first-strike.⁵⁶ A balance had to be found whereby the US could extend its nuclear umbrella to Europe to compensate for the deficiencies in NATO's denial forces, while at the same time not subjecting the US to a high risk of destruction for defending its allies and interests in Europe.⁵⁷ The fundamental problem with extended deterrence was not the result of the scale of the threat that the US was making to the Soviet Union in order to deter it, but rather the decreased credibility of the pledge to carry it out in the defence of Europe. Thus, bolstering the credibility of any extended deterrent commitment had to rely on the deterrer raising the probability that the threat would be carried out. This situation definitely served to put the strategy of extended deterrence into the 'difficult' camp.⁵⁸

VI

⁵⁶A first-strike, apart from representing the opening salvo in a nuclear exchange, has also come to imply the direction of the attack at the nuclear forces of the opponent, with the objective of hindering its retaliatory or second-strike capability. A second-strike force is one which is able to ensure effective retaliation even after it has absorbed a first-strike. Whereas a first-strike necessarily implies a counterforce attack, a second or retaliatory strike need be no more than countervalue in nature.

⁵⁷Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies, p. 184.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

'Strategic doctrine' is one of those terms that is used so freely and frequently that any consistent meaning becomes lost in the process. Usage of the term is often unaccompanied by any significant effort at defining the term adequately or situating it in the proper context. Not only is the idea of strategic doctrine controversial and lacking any definite consensus regarding its composition, but, as many see it, US strategy is not encapsulated in or under any single 'doctrine'. At its rudimentary core, "strategic doctrine refers to a connected series of beliefs, and related statements, about strategy."⁵⁹ Therefore, strategic doctrine here refers to a general set of beliefs and theories regarding the usage of armed force which can be further divided into more specific areas and subjects. Strategic doctrine, being the result of grand strategic considerations, is the product of both the political and military input from which it is formulated. Military doctrine, in contrast, is more of a subcategory of strategic doctrine that is normally devoid of political considerations.

Strategic doctrine serves a myriad of functions. Obviously, its major role is to define and justify deterrent postures and force deployments. In this way, doctrine provides a sense of purpose by defining postures and roles. It also provides a rationale for budgetary and fiscal expenditures and for present or desired weapons systems. Doctrine also serves to affect adversarial perceptions and can, by its nature, affect the character of interactions, as by adopting a doctrine that implies a certain situation or state of affairs, 'parity' and 'superiority' being examples of these.⁶⁰ By helping to define concepts such as 'stability', the formulation of strategic doctrine can affect arms control policies and postures. Towards such ends doctrine can serve to influence one's objectives vis-a-vis the opponent, and also act as a means of hindering its options.

⁵⁹Paul Buteux, Strategy, Doctrine, and the Politics of Alliance (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), p. 4.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 22.

A strategic doctrine may be deemed credible to the extent that the military posture that is defined by it is seen as capable of achieving the goals for which it is designed.⁶¹ However, regardless of considerations of credibility, the doctrine must also be politically appropriate and acceptable. If a strategy were only designed for military security and nothing else, it would more than likely fail to be politically acceptable. For instance, the resort to strategic nuclear retaliation in the event of the failure of deterrence would be considered politically inappropriate if the consequences were nuclear annihilation. A doctrine that is inappropriate thus becomes one of diminished credibility, for it may in fact be self-deterring, as in this scenario.

Given that in the nuclear age, superpower policy, if not declaratory strategy, reflected the belief that the only utility of nuclear weapons lay in their non-use, the manipulation of strategic doctrine "then became one of the few ways available to exploit such utility as they did possess."⁶² Thus, the interactions of the strategic doctrines of the superpowers, and of each's perception of the other's doctrine, should have been of both political and military significance.

VII

Conceptually, there must be a relationship between strategic doctrine and arms control, both of which are important factors in the notion of the so-called 'security dilemma', because both are aimed ultimately at enhancing national security and international stability. Strategic doctrine is important because it relates military means to political ends in regard to perceived national security needs. Thus, strategic doctrine can be seen as not only enhancing security, but also as potentially producing international

⁶¹Ibid., p. 12.

⁶²Paul Buteux, "Trends in Superpower Strategic Doctrine," in R.B. Byers (ed), Nuclear Strategy and the Superpowers (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1984), p. 43.

stability as well. Similarly, arms control can be perceived as codifying national security needs in a bi- or multilateral framework, and thus is seen as not only enhancing stability, but often as producing it. One should expect that defence policies and the requisite strategic doctrine should be of paramount concern to arms controllers, because arms control is about dealing with weapons, and that is also what strategic doctrine is about. A 'stable' strategic relationship between the superpowers is one that would be highly conducive to meaningful arms control negotiations and agreements. Indeed, stability ought to be one of the primary goals of any arms control endeavour, for when a situation of arms race stability is said to exist, the likelihood of one side seeking military advantage over the other is lessened. Although desirable, such a strategic capability is usually judged to be unattainable.

However, the reality of the 1970s and 1980s was not so congruent with theory. Numerous factors, such as extended deterrence commitments and renewed enthusiasm for the idea of strategic defence, combined to make the maintenance of a stable deterrent relationship increasingly difficult, and the scope for arms control efforts diminished similarly. While arms control, at the surface level, may appear to produce stability (because both sides reach some sort of agreement), and may thus be seen to possess some form of political utility, the fact is that its effect on strategic doctrine may lead to military insecurity, which undermines it. An agreement reached without proper consideration and analysis of the military and national security implications can be one which only jeopardizes strategic requirements. Hence, an agreement lacking in this area may indeed be worse than a politically beneficial one. If this is the case, then there is a problem between the theoretical demands and the empirical evidence. Thus, it is important to examine START, for it dealt with actual reductions in the superpower strategic arsenals. The problem with SALT was that it dealt with limitations rather than reductions. In doing so, the strategic doctrines and force requirements of each side were

likely influenced to a relatively minor degree by the agreement itself. As a result, political considerations played a greater role, and strategic doctrinal considerations were likely of lesser importance regarding the arms control process. While it is generally assumed that arms control will enhance stability, in fact, if strategic doctrine does not play a central role, it may not produce stability, but rather instability and insecurity.

An important distinction must be made between doctrine and arms control. Whereas arms control is by definition a highly politicized undertaking, strategic doctrine, in many ways, is more difficult to define as inherently 'military' or 'political' in nature. It is a combination of both. The multitude of issue areas that combine to form 'doctrine' include not only those at the level of declaratory policy and those who are responsible for the implementation of such policy (those involved in the operational aspects of doctrine), but also those responsible for the actual formation of arms control negotiating positions. However, whereas strategic doctrine is revised and reformulated as a result of primarily military considerations regarding domestic political concerns, strategic arms control, because of its bilateral nature, is inherently political, and in this way may differ from the more one-sided perceptions of those responsible for the formulation of strategic doctrine. Thus, the evolution of negotiating positions of an actor at the arms control table will be a function of military considerations as they are affected by political considerations related to arms control. Given that previous efforts at strategic arms control (such as SALT) were determined largely by highly public and political factors, one could predict that these concerns were likely to dominate the START negotiations. Thus, the ongoing START process might serve to shape and influence military thinking and strategic doctrine. The net result is likely to be a doctrine which reflects the arms control agenda rather than perceived national security interests. In so doing, the doctrine (and thereby the arms control agreement) might be detrimental to national security. Therefore, the theoretical demand that strategic doctrine should

determine the arms control agenda may conflict with the empirical case, wherein arms control determines strategic doctrine and defence policies.

While superpower cooperation in the military sphere might have appeared beneficial to both sides, at least theoretically, the likelihood of any mutually acceptable agreement being reached was more often than not determined by the overall character of the deterrent relationship. As Buzan has convincingly argued, the ideal condition for an arms control regime to flourish would be one in which each superpower accepted MAD as a doctrine, and where each was committed to a minimal deterrent posture. If this situation were to exist, then management of the status quo would be possible at relatively low levels of armament. In addition, each side would have greater incentive to seek reduced defence expenditures, given that the relationship would be a less threatening one. In such an environment, many areas for mutual cooperation might indeed exist. In fact, one might argue that this is the situation that has obtained since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the cessation of the Cold War.

In contrast, if the bilateral relationship is a more 'difficult' one, in which both sides have contrasting defence commitments, or pursue divergent doctrines or policies, then the prospects of significant achievements in the area of arms control are dramatically reduced. For example, extended deterrence commitments, such as the longstanding US nuclear guarantee to defend Western Europe in the event of an offensive by the Soviet Union, or the pursuit of policies that are perceived as threatening or destabilizing (as with plans for any form of strategic or area defence) served only to reduce the scope for arms control endeavours.⁶³ In the 1980s, with the increased pursuit of warfighting options by each of the superpowers (which are elements of maximal deterrent postures), mutual suspicion and fear was great enough to seriously

⁶³Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies, p. 261.

reduce any prospects for arms control. At best, the arms control relationship in such a situation tended to be one of rhetoric rather than one of reductions.

When each superpower adheres to a different doctrinal posture, misunderstandings are more likely to occur, and thus potential areas of agreement become that much more limited. As Buzan argues, manipulation and misunderstanding are likely to prevail when one side misinterprets the doctrine of the other, a situation that prevailed in the 1960s and into the 1970s. While this is somewhat paradoxical, given that this period came to be known as the 'Golden Age' of superpower arms control, it is likely attributable to the fact that doctrinal differences were overshadowed by the ability of the United States to "carry the costs"⁶⁴ of arms control with the Soviet Union. As the USSR approached strategic parity with the US, however, differences began to emerge. Doctrinal differences became much more obvious, and efforts at arms control subsided. Many in the US, fearful of the decline in the margin of American superiority, turned against the process, and its pursuit became somewhat more difficult. Hence, the more difficult each side believes it to be to maintain a sufficient deterrent, the more difficult it becomes to realize an arms control agreement.

Since a stable deterrent relationship ultimately rests on the assured destruction capabilities of each side, as manifested in a secure second-strike force, any agreement which places the retaliatory capability of one side in question will be one that is destabilizing. Because of the reliance on a system of mutual deterrence, agreements must be in accordance rather than in conflict with the requirements of such a capability. Because of this, an overly ambitious program of disarmament could easily be as destabilizing as an unrestrained arms race in undermining deterrence.⁶⁵ Thus, it is not

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 262.

⁶⁵Garnett, p. 197.

necessarily the case that stability is greatest when the number of weapons or warheads is lowest. Indeed, one might argue that there is greater safety in higher levels of armament. In addition to the unlikelihood of such a posture contributing to the undermining of deterrence, the argument is frequently made that the consequences of any violations of an agreement are much less dangerous for that state with a large arsenal than for one that relies on a small deterrent force.

While a conceptual link might be said to exist between arms control and strategic doctrine at the theoretical level, there remains the important question of whether this relationship exists in the operational realm. If it does, is some form of causality involved, or is the connection a much more amorphous one? It is clear that a host of variables come into play when examining the interplay between arms control and strategic doctrine: strategic bipolarity, the Cold War, shifts in US doctrine, technology, and politics are all important examples of these. All combine to render a conceptually attractive and straightforward theoretical relationship somewhat more opaque in reality. The SALT negotiations and subsequent agreements were unique from other strategic arms control efforts in some important ways. Originating as they did in the period of detente in the superpower relationship, they were arguably much more political than military strategic in nature and significance. START, on the other hand, was realized at the close of the Cold War, and in a different political and military climate. These variables, in addition to the ones mentioned above, combined in different ways to affect what ended up being some very different agreements.

Chapter Two: The SALT Years: Strategic Arms Control and the Evolution of
American Strategic Doctrine

The SALT-START record does not clearly reveal any integration between arms control and (nuclear) strategy. In fact, both the interwar and the postwar protracted experiences with arms limitation show unmistakably that there is a deep-rooted tension, even antithesis, between strategy and the Western democratic practice of arms control negotiation.¹

In practice, real, live American and Soviet politicians...neither know nor care about the fifty-seven or more varieties of 'stability'...It is precisely the destabilizing qualities of the SS-18 Mod. 5 that renders it so politically attractive to the Soviets.²

The aforementioned observations serve to highlight the tensions that exist between what is theoretically desirable or plausible and what is operationally realistic vis-a-vis the relationship between strategic doctrine and arms control. While, at least conceptually, a harmonious relationship between the two might be seen to exist, such is not the case when one examines the operational dimension of US declaratory strategic doctrine as juxtaposed against the evolution of the US negotiating position at the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and the subsequent agreements of 1972 and 1979. Through examination of both of these dimensions, it becomes clear that the real driving forces behind US strategic arms control negotiating positions are not so much those related to doctrinal requirements (such as strategic stability), as they are of political considerations, negotiation, technology, and other variables.

Although the formal negotiations on SALT did not begin until 1969, its genesis in fact occurred many years earlier, with the United States becoming increasingly concerned with certain developments in the strategic relationship with the Soviet Union on one hand, and the impact of these developments on its own strategic forces on the other. Throughout the 1960s, the US and Soviet strategic arsenals had been developing

¹Colin S. Gray, "Destination Unknown: From SALT to START", Strategic Review, Spring 1991, p. 38.

²Ibid., p. 35.

in different directions. As the result of the failed quick fix to the strategic balance that resulted in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the USSR had launched a formidable military buildup. The United States, under Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, was at the same time making an effort to contain the momentum of its own strategic modernization programs, which had been proceeding quite rapidly since the 1950s. By the late-1960s, the Soviet Union had (in the eyes of the United States) come to possess a first-strike capability,³ and the US had come to acquire evidence that they were about to deploy an area anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system. Together, these developments were seen to tilt the strategic balance in the USSR's favor. With the McNamara slowdown, the USSR could have been in a position of strategic superiority within the next decade.

Upon becoming Secretary of Defense in 1961, one of McNamara's first tasks was to be briefed on the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP), the US plan to fight a strategic nuclear war. He was so horrified and disturbed by what he had learned that he was motivated to seek constraints on the pace and scope of a nuclear war if one were to break out.⁴ Even by 1963, the year in which the first Minuteman ICBMs became operational, the President of the United States was able to launch them only in multiples of 50, and each ICBM was able to be programmed only with a solitary preselected target.⁵ These serve as two examples of a variety of motivating factors which led McNamara to introduce changes to US declaratory and operational doctrine.

³RAND analyst Albert Wohlstetter and a group of CIA analysts had come to independently conclude that the US land-based missile force would be vulnerable to Soviet attack by the end of the decade. However, by the late-1960s the CIA had revised its estimate and decided that Minuteman would not be at risk prior to the late-1970s. Gregg Herken, Counsels of War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 270-271.

⁴Fred Kaplan, The Wizards of Armageddon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 262.

⁵Ibid., p. 281.

The United States at this time chose to pursue two of McNamara's initiatives: damage limitation and a 'no-cities' strategy. Damage limitation was the term developed for the concept of limiting damage to the civilian population in the event of nuclear war. It was really just another word for 'counterforce', which meant the targeting of military and industrial centres as opposed to 'countervalue' ones, which were population centres. So in pursuing a 'no-cities' strategy, McNamara wanted to take the emphasis away from the nuclear hostage relationship, with its emphasis on the threat of killing millions of civilians. Instead, a counterforce strategy would seek to attack the military forces and industrial potential of the adversary. Thus, 'no-cities' was an effort at damage limitation. In June of 1962, McNamara elaborated on the alterations to US doctrine and forces in an address to the NATO Council:

...the US has come to the conclusion that to the extent feasible basic military strategy in general nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. That is to say, our principal military objectives, in the event of a nuclear war stemming from a major attack on the Alliance, should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces while attempting to preserve the fabric as well as the integrity of allied society. Specifically, our studies indicate that a strategy which targets nuclear forces only against cities or a mixture of civil and military targets has serious limitations for the purpose of deterrence and for the conduct of general nuclear war.⁶

This was the origin of the US doctrine of 'no-cities', although the SIOP still included options which targeted Soviet urban centres.

While the US was not intending to pursue a first-strike against the Soviet Union, the problem with counterforce/no cities was that the force structure was quite similar to one that did represent such an intent. The motivation behind the shift was the fear,

⁶Robert S. McNamara, "Speech to NATO Council, Athens, 5 May 1962," in Philip Bobbitt, Lawrence Freedman, and Gregory F. Treverton (eds.), US Nuclear Strategy: A Reader (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1989), p. 206.

despite the presence of numerous options, that a central nuclear war might break out. If that did happen, the US wanted to keep the damage to the absolute lowest levels possible. At this time, the USSR had no counterforce capability of its own, so its response to the US shift was understandably hostile and suspicious.⁷ It was disconcerting to McNamara that the second-strike counterforce posture of the United States should appear as a first-strike threat to the USSR, but the forces involved were the same. The USSR also knew that the best means of limiting damage was by striking first, and the US was the only possessor of such a capability by the early to mid-1960s.

To the United States, the no-cities idea was attractive because attacking Soviet military forces instead of cities meant that the US credibility problem of extended deterrence could be sidestepped: US cities would not have to be sacrificed for European ones because cities would hopefully be spared altogether. Because of this, the development of French and British nuclear forces would be seen as impeding the strategy because they would be of a purely countervalue nature, and would therefore hinder US attempts at sparing civilians.⁸

The no-cities approach was frowned upon by members of the NATO Alliance. Its emphasis on strong conventional forces meant that the allies would not only have to face greater defence expenditures, but this strategy was likely to raise the threshold at which nuclear weapons would be employed in the defence of Europe. This meant that a conventional war in Europe was more likely with this doctrine in place. Similarly, and somewhat more disconcerting to the NATO allies, the no-cities approach appeared to be a step towards the delinking of the defence of Europe from the strategic forces of the United

⁷Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), p. 243.

⁸Ibid., p. 283.

States. Even worse than this was the possibility that a nuclear war could be limited to Europe.⁹

By 1963, McNamara was coming to the realization that Soviet forces could not and would not be limited to a level below 100 ICBMs. He found this unacceptable. With the expected developments over the next few years in Soviet ICBM and SLBM forces, the prospects for limiting damage to the United States decreased. For one, to limit damage in this situation would be prohibitively expensive. More importantly, at least 100 million US citizens were still expected to perish in a nuclear war.¹⁰ Damage limitation was just not going to work.

SALT originated not in the arms control bureaucracy, but in the Pentagon. In 1963 Paul Nitze and his assistant, Elmo Zumwalt Jr., collaborated on a paper which outlined various arms reduction options in what they referred to as a "separable first stage disarmament agreement."¹¹ McNamara was also growing increasingly concerned that the USSR was close to deploying a massive ABM system, and would with this technology come to call into question the US assured destruction capability within the next decade. At the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva on January 21, 1964, US President Johnson in his message proposed a "verified freeze" on both offensive and defensive weapons systems as a follow-on to the US-Soviet Partial Test-Ban (PTB) Treaty of 1963. This proposal called for freezing strategic systems at then current levels and for on-site negotiation. Not surprisingly, it was rejected outright by the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, in 1966, Johnson accepted McNamara's proposal that the US initiate talks with the USSR. Johnson met Soviet Premier Kosygin at the Glassboro,

⁹Gregory F. Treverton, "From No Cities to Stable Vulnerability," in Bobbitt et al, p. 194.

¹⁰Kaplan, p. 324.

¹¹Steven L. Rearden, The Evolution of American Strategic Doctrine: Paul H. Nitze and the Soviet Challenge (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), p. 64.

New Jersey summit in the next year, and the two agreed that formal constraints on the arms race ought to be pursued.

McNamara feared the power inherent in the increasing momentum possessed by technology and the possible implications of this for the United States, and he had succeeded at getting strategic arms control to the top of the Johnson administration's agenda.¹² At the same time, he had been resisting pressure from both the Defense Department and Congress to deploy the Nike-X ABM system, arguing that it would only intensify the race in strategic offensive arms. In 1967 Johnson instructed the US ambassador to the USSR to suggest a treaty limiting ABM deployments. After the public disclosure of information that indicated that the US was pursuing the deployment of an ABM system and that it was testing multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) technology, Soviet Premier Kosygin indicated that the USSR would consider the offer. By the end of June 1968, the Soviet Union announced that it was ready to initiate a dialogue on the restriction of strategic systems with the United States.

Johnson's committee tasked with developing an initial negotiating position viewed as imperative the need to pursue a freeze on both offensive and defensive systems as a first step in introducing some constraints on the arms dynamic. The initial problem for the US negotiators was in finding a position which would not jeopardize US security yet be acceptable to the Soviet Union at the same time. The US goal was for the negotiations to result in a non-zero sum outcome that did not impart an advantage to either side.¹³

Johnson's concern that a Soviet ABM deployment would create pressures for an American equivalent had been realized. At the Glassboro summit in New Jersey in 1967,

¹²David Callahan, Dangerous Capabilities: Paul Nitze and the Cold War (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), p. 320.

¹³Paul H. Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision - A Memoir (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), p. 291.

both sides had agreed on the necessity of negotiations, although the United States had pressed for controls on defensive systems, and the USSR for constraints on offensive forces. With pressure from Congress and the Department of Defense, Johnson conceded in his struggle against the ABM. Were it to be deployed, his preference was for an area defence system, one that could protect American population centres from attack. However, the ease with which Soviet offensive countermeasures could overcome such a defence led to a shift in administration policy. In September 1967, McNamara publicly announced that the US would proceed with a limited ABM system which would ostensibly be aimed at the emerging ICBM threat posed by the Chinese.¹⁴

Originally, the US had decided to pursue the deployment of the Sentinel ABM system in 1967. It was to comprise a "light" ABM system geared towards an area defence. McNamara was pressured into deploying the system by US officials, including Johnson, who argued that Sentinel would bolster the US deterrent in a crisis, discourage proliferation by enhancing the US nuclear guarantee in Asia, limit the severity of a Chinese ICBM attack, and limit the damage to the United States from an ICBM attack of any source.¹⁵ Sentinel's Chinese orientation was likely a fabrication in order to justify a "thin" ABM deployment, which would be the minimum necessary to "satisfy domestic demands."¹⁶ Some did, however, believe in the need to deploy a system against the emerging ICBM force of the Chinese. On March 14, 1969, US President Nixon announced the decision to modify the Sentinel system, which would now be known as "Safeguard". This system differed in that it comprised a point defence of ICBM fields in its first phase, which was to be followed by national coverage in a following one. By 1969 it was

¹⁴Callahan, p. 326.

¹⁵Jerome H. Kahan, Security in the Nuclear Age: Developing US Strategic Arms Policy (Washington, The Brookings Institution, 1975), p. 103.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 104.

apparent that this nascent Chinese threat had not emerged. However, Soviet MIRV improvements meant that they likely possessed the capability to threaten the US Minuteman ICBM force, thereby justifying the shift in ABM systems.¹⁷

A separate but equally important motivating factor in the US desire to pursue a negotiated strategic arms treaty with the USSR resulted from the different force postures that the two sides were pursuing at that time. While the United States, under the guidance of McNamara, sought to restrain the pace of its strategic modernization that had built up throughout the Johnson administration, the USSR was in the midst of a buildup in its offensive (mostly ICBM) forces. Possessing, at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, more than a fourfold advantage in ICBM launchers over the USSR (229 to 50), by 1970 the Soviet Union had deployed 1427 launchers to the United States' 1054. Over the same period, the US SLBM launcher force expanded to 656 from 144, while the Soviet force had grown to 289 from 97.¹⁸ Thus, by 1970, when US strategic offensive deployments had begun to level off, those same programs of the Soviet Union had accelerated at the rate of 100-150 new ICBMs annually. Although disconcerting to the leadership of the United States, this movement towards more quantitatively equal strategic arsenals was likely necessary for any serious discussions regarding strategic arms limitation to occur, for US goals of slowing the pace of Soviet weapons programs were likely to be possible only if the US was prepared to slow the growth of its own forces in order to allow the USSR to "catch up".¹⁹

While one of the primary objectives of the US in securing a strategic arms control agreement lay in constraining ABM deployment both in the USSR and in the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁸Nitze, p. 287.

¹⁹Thomas W. Wolfe, The SALT Experience (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1979), p. 5.

United States, the Soviet Union quite obviously did not share this desire. Wanting instead to include in the negotiations both offensive and defensive forces, the Soviet Union eventually reached agreement with the US to discuss not only defensive systems such as ABM, but the possibility of limiting strategic offensive forces as well. At this point the USSR was also interested in negotiations that would reduce or eliminate US forward-based systems (FBS), for it had long sought to decouple US strategic forces from the defence of Western Europe. Acquiring reductions in this area would be a solid first step towards such a goal.

One area which would be of technological importance throughout the SALT process, and of which the US was the sole possessor at the time, was that of the multiple, independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV). Later to be considered as one of the great destabilizing factors in the superpower strategic relationship, the Soviet Union had yet to deploy this technology in 1970. MIRV technology conferred upon that side possessing it the theoretical ability to launch a disarming first-strike upon an opponent. Given that it normally takes two warheads to eliminate a single ICBM silo, in the pre-MIRV era such a debilitating surprise attack would have been all but impossible. MIRV revolutionized the status quo: with five or more independently targeted warheads upon a single missile, it was now possible for the US to destroy the Soviet land-based leg of the strategic triad with only a fraction of its own force. With both superpowers in possession of this technology by the mid-1970s,²⁰ this situation held for both sides, and created the strategic condition of mutually assured destruction (MAD). Paradoxically, this came to mean that the most lethal and threatening weapons had at this time also become the most vulnerable. By way of example, MIRV meant that it was more likely, in

²⁰The United States had deployed MIRVs by the late 1960s, while the Soviet Union did not begin its testing program for this technology until 1973.

time of crisis, that each side would give increased consideration to launching a preemptive first-strike, given the MIRV's force multiplying effect.

Although the US had been only mildly interested in pursuing a negotiated strategic arms agreement with the USSR in the early 1960s, one of the reasons for the change in this view by the middle of the decade was the result of the increasing belief amongst senior US officials that an agreement of such a nature could serve the strategic interests of the United States. However, many US policymakers demanded nothing less than the codification of American superiority in any such agreement.²¹ Although by 1968 the US position had become less intransigent, the negotiating position was still one that was likely to be rejected by the Soviet Union. After considerable deliberations, the US negotiating team put together by Johnson had emerged with a solitary and overriding objective for SALT: the acquisition of a freeze on land-based ICBMs, MRBMs, and submarine-launched missiles. Also on the US agenda were bans on land mobile strategic systems and mobile ABM systems.²² By this time, the US ABM program had built up sufficient momentum so as to prevent it from being halted in any complete sense in a negotiated agreement with the USSR, and it was even less likely that the US would make any concessions towards a MIRV ban.²³

It can thus be seen that, in the mid-1960s, the US was faced with two somewhat contradictory desires - seeking limits to the strategic modernization of the superpower arsenals, and also the offsetting of Soviet gains acquired through its strategic buildup. This latter desire, perhaps the stronger of the two, manifested itself in the US pursuit of

²¹Kahan, p. 139.

²²Nitze, p. 292.

²³Kahan, p. 139.

both ABM and MIRV technology.²⁴ At the same time, it is quite likely that the leaders of each side came to realize by the mid-1960s that mutual reductions or ceilings on strategic deployment and modernization might in fact be desirable as a means of stabilizing the bilateral strategic relationship. Furthermore, in the wake of such hostile confrontations as the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, SALT could be seen as “a major instrumentality for seeking readjustment of the US-Soviet power relationship and for facilitating the political passage from cold war to detente.”²⁵

McNamara’s efforts at strategic restraint were aimed at the quantitative dimension of the US strategic arsenal; qualitative improvements were still to be pursued. Thus, when MIRV technology became operationally feasible, McNamara had at his disposal a cost-effective means of avoiding expensive missile programs that were being increasingly advocated by his opponents. In addition to this, SALT’s genesis was occurring at a time when the US was becoming increasingly doubtful of the prospects of success of the US strategy of damage limitation. While it seems that McNamara still supported the strategy, it was becoming increasingly unfeasible in practice.²⁶ McNamara’s decision to pursue SALT also arose out of his effort “to reconcile his commitment to a damage-limiting strategy with the knowledge that such a strategy would not work.”²⁷ Indeed, this was, as John Newhouse put it, the time of the “last hurrah” for damage limitation - the term was being used much less frequently after 1964, the same year in which the assured destruction criteria were to emerge. This was mostly

²⁴John Newhouse, Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 68.

²⁵Wolfe, p. 4.

²⁶Newhouse, p. 66.

²⁷Ibid.

the result of the end of US strategic superiority over its Soviet adversary. By the mid-1960s the USSR was close to achieving an assured second-strike capability.²⁸

McNamara had decided that a baseline US force of approximately 1054 ICBMs and 656 SLBMs was required in order to meet the assured destruction criteria. This would be in line with the requirement of the criterion that the US be able to destroy 20 to 25 percent of the Soviet population and about 50 percent of its industrial capacity. This, according to McNamara, would constitute an effective deterrent. Early on in the Kennedy administration, a version of the concept of second-strike counterforce had been added to the US policy of assured destruction. A force level in between that of a minimal and that of a maximal deterrent posture was deemed adequate. This concept was embodied in McNamara's June 1962 Ann Arbor speech which called for the US and USSR to forego primarily urban (countervalue) targeting in favor of military (counterforce) targeting.

In time, McNamara's force-sizing was determined by the criterion of mutual assured destruction (MAD), which emphasized second-strike retaliation over counterforce and the related concept of damage limitation. After adopting a second-strike capability as the basic requirement for US strategic forces, McNamara began to back down from the emphasis on the strategy of damage limitation inherent in US targeting doctrine. He argued that such a strategy was undesirable largely because of the provocative effect such a posture would have on the USSR. If the nascent Soviet assured destruction capability was called into question in such a manner, Soviet reaction in the form of a strategic buildup would be a probable response. Hence, McNamara narrowed his force requirements to the concept of MAD, in which counterforce targeting was superseded by a general assured destruction capability. As Wolfe has noted, this was to

²⁸ibid., p. 67.

remain "the basic US strategic rationale for at least the next decade, and one which, in the opinion of some observers, both sides came to recognize as the underlying principle around which SALT was organized."²⁹

Differences in the approaches of the two sides in progressing towards the 1972 agreements were encountered over not only substantive issues, but as a result of different negotiating styles as well. While the USSR sought an agreement of rather broad constraints on most strategic arms geared towards a politically substantive agreement (which SALT has come to symbolize above most of the military-technical accomplishments it might have achieved), the United States sought a more specific, technologically-oriented agreement intended to have primarily military significance and that would help stabilize the strategic balance.³⁰

While the US had initially decided to pursue strategic arms negotiations with the idea of an ABM freeze at the forefront of its concerns, a Soviet proposal to defer negotiations on offensive systems to SALT II was rejected by the US delegation in December of 1970. By this time the continuing Soviet offensive strategic buildup - in particular the SS-9 'heavy' ICBM, which the US most wanted to constrain - had shifted American priorities from concerns of destabilizing defensive systems (ABMs) to offensive intercontinental ones. Thus, the incoming Nixon Administration was not prepared to accept any agreement on ABMs without an offensive component to the agreement as well.

While the US Congress had by 1969 come to believe that an ABM system would be a valuable bargaining chip at SALT, it eventually came to the realization that it was not only a costly proposition, but that it might encourage an arms race as well. The Soviet

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., p. 9.

Union, mindful of US technological superiority in defensive systems, thus agreed to pursue an ABM ban, which eventually limited each side to two sites.³¹ This was later amended in a protocol to the ABM treaty to allow each side no more than a single ABM complex.

Differences had also arisen between the adversaries regarding the issues of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and 'heavy' ICBMs. As for the former, the US, in a position of superiority vis-a-vis the Soviet Union's sea-based component of the strategic triad, obviously sought inclusion of SLBMs in any putative agreement, while the USSR remained vehemently opposed to any such formal codification of its position of SLBM inferiority. The US was much more concerned over the potential threat posed to its Minuteman ICBM force by new generations of larger Soviet ICBMs. Because of this, US negotiators sought a sublimit on numbers of heavy ICBMs, a clarification of the exact definition of such a missile, and a restriction on increases in the size of already existing ICBM silos in order to prevent the deployment of such heavy Soviet ICBMs.³²

One week after becoming President of the United States in 1968, Richard Nixon announced his intention to pursue the concept of 'strategic sufficiency', which was a departure from his campaign rhetoric that had him advocating a position of US strategic superiority. More than one factor was responsible for this shift, however. Although his public pronouncement emphasized that talk of superiority could in fact be deleterious to the pursuit of stability by initiating an arms race,³³ it was evident that the defence decisions pursued by his administration were largely affected by domestic political pressures. Nixon had thus to depart from the large degree of emphasis placed on defence

³¹John H. Barton, The Politics of Peace: An Evaluation of Arms Control (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), p. 150.

³²Wolfe, p. 10.

³³McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 544.

by his predecessors. This meant lowered defence spending and a reduced role for the US in the world, especially given the legacy of the Vietnam War. Were it possible that strategic superiority were attainable, it would be prohibitively expensive. Nixon believed it to be unattainable given the realities of the time.³⁴

While generally accepting of McNamara's assured destruction policy guidance, at least in the declaratory sense (Nixon referred to it as a "fundamental element of [US] strategic policy"³⁵), US officials were somewhat concerned that there might be a greater risk of nuclear war if the Soviet Union came to view the possible outcome of a strategic exchange as 'favorable'. Thus, upon reviewing US strategic nuclear policy, the administration came to the conclusion that the degree of destruction that the US should be able to inflict in a second-strike against the Soviet Union would be measured on a relative scale, "taking into account the Soviet Union's capacity to damage the United States."³⁶ This would increase the credibility of the US deterrent threat. As time passed, Nixon was to become less and less confident in pursuing a policy of assured destruction, especially in light of a Soviet military buildup that had continued unabated for the previous five or six years. American forces had, in the quantitative sense, remained largely static during this period.

Nixon's policy of strategic sufficiency included the maintenance of an assured destruction capability; enhancing stability by reducing the vulnerability of US strategic forces; and ensuring that the USSR did not achieve what might be deemed to be a position of quantitative strategic superiority over the United States. It was also considered important to develop flexible options which would allow the US to respond in controlled and limited ways in the case of a strategic nuclear engagement. Although this factor was

³⁴See Kahan, pp. 143-145.

³⁵Ibid., p. 157.

³⁶Ibid.

never officially recognized as part of the criteria of sufficiency, it was a crucial consideration in the administration's policy statements and arms programs.³⁷

The Nixon administration's approach to SALT was premised on the belief that arms control must be part of a broader body of US defence and foreign policy objectives. In this sense, one would expect doctrine to be the driving force behind any arms control negotiating initiatives and objectives. Two main strategic objectives were set forth by Nixon: the preservation of a stable deterrent relationship with the USSR and the negotiating of an "effective" strategic arms treaty.³⁸

The US team under Nixon entered the SALT negotiations in Helsinki in November 1969 with much domestic pressure to reach an agreement with the USSR. Infighting amongst the American political constituency only complicated matters further. In its opening statement at Helsinki, the delegation stated that it was the intention of the United States - with or without an agreement - to maintain a strategic posture fully capable of defending the United States and its allies. It was believed that it was within the realm of possibility to reach an agreement that would improve the situation for both sides, and therefore was non-zero sum in nature. The delegation also believed that the greatest increase in security and stability would be obtained through an agreement which included deep cuts in strategic weapons. It was hoped that the open verification needed to enforce such an agreement would be agreed to by the Soviet Union. In contrast to their American counterparts, the Soviets, in their opening statement, spoke in vague generalities, as if their only instructions from Moscow were to delay things for as long as possible.³⁹

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

³⁹ Nitze, p. 306.

Some members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee believed that the US delegation was being too hard on the Soviet Union in its negotiating demands. In one member's words, the Committee "considered it more important to cut a deal than to remain firm on significant points under negotiation."⁴⁰ Thus, there was always absent a concrete US position to put forward at the negotiations, one that had the support of all branches of the US government.

An area of considerable vacillation within the US government throughout the duration of both SALT I and II was the notion of a MIRV ban. When Johnson set up the negotiating team for the US, there existed no definitive US position on MIRV. Although only in the testing stage at that time, MIRVs had been under study since the early 1960s. The problems that this new technology posed to arms control were obvious, and for this reason some consideration had been given to a MIRV ban. The obvious argument against a ban was that the US was the sole possessor of this technology, and it was not about to give something away for nothing. Many in the US administration questioned the idea of an outright ban because of the Soviet advances in ABM and the associated radar technology. The USSR could upgrade their SAM systems sufficiently so as to be able to track incoming warheads, and this could not be prevented even if an ABM agreement were realized.⁴¹ No MIRV ban was ever reached by the time of the conclusion of the SALT negotiations. This was largely attributable to the considerable verification problems that they posed, in addition to the stiff opposition to the idea by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁴² Some members of the US negotiating team did, however, advocate a US fallback position on MIRV should the USSR raise it in the discussions.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 304.

⁴¹Callahan, p. 336.

⁴²Dean Rusk, As I Saw It (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), p. 350.

At the negotiations, the US delegation was moving further away from the idea of pursuing a MIRV ban, as the United States was by now relying greatly on the technology, and the verification problems that accompanied it seemed to be insurmountable, especially in light of continued Soviet rejection of the concept of on-site verification. As part of the ongoing effort to secure reductions in the Soviet ICBM force, a permanent objective of almost any US negotiating team, the American delegation proposed reducing the number of US heavy bombers in exchange for Soviet concessions in this area. This became known as the Vienna Option. However, as the close of the Vienna round of negotiations approached, it was becoming evident that while the USSR sought to constrain the US development of ABM, it was rather unwilling to make similar concessions in the offensive realm in return. The US tabled a proposal based on the Vienna Option on July 9, 1970, which, to some, made significant US concessions while receiving none from their Soviet counterparts. Under this option, strategic bombers would be included in the agreement, and controls on MIRVs would be abandoned, while the MRBM/ICBM and forward-based systems (FBS) questions remained off of the table.⁴³

The issue of forward-based systems (FBS) came to be a major area of disagreement not only in SALT I, but in the follow on SALT II negotiations as well. The Soviet position offered two options to the US, neither of which was particularly attractive. The USSR either required complete US withdrawal of all such systems from allied territory, or their inclusion in the overall quantitative ceiling for US strategic forces. Under the joint compromise of May 20, 1971, it was agreed that the issue would be temporarily set aside in the negotiations leading up to the initial SALT agreement. At Vladivostok however, in the SALT II negotiations, the USSR dropped its insistence that FBS be included in an agreement, a decision which came as a great surprise to the US

⁴³Ibid., p. 310.

delegation.⁴⁴ Table 2.1 illustrates the superpower strategic balance a few years prior to the signing of SALT I.

TABLE 2.1
The Strategic Balance (1968)*

	<u>Bombers</u>	<u>SLBMs</u>	<u>ICBMs</u>
US	646	656	1054
USSR	150	46	986

The protocol of the Interim Agreement limited the United States to 710 SLBM launchers on 44 ballistic missile submarines, while the USSR was granted 950 launchers on 62 submarines.⁴⁵ The SALT I offensive levels are contained in Table 2.2. Paul Nitze has maintained that this was not only a large (and unrequited) concession to the Soviet Union, but that the US could have obtained a better deal were it not so eager to reach agreement.⁴⁶ A similar sentiment came out of a Congressional hearing on SALT:

As was proven in the SALT I agreement, when the negotiations were against a set deadline (the summit conference), 35 percent of the substance of any agreement will be settled in the last thirty minutes of the negotiations. This is one example of a negotiating

⁴⁴Kahan, p. 103.

* Scott D. Sagan, Moving Targets: Nuclear Strategy and National Security (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 38.

⁴⁵Protocol to the Interim Agreement Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Certain Measures With Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. While the USSR was granted larger SLBM totals at SALT I, this was likely due in part to the superiority in US SLBM technology. Quantitative advantage might therefore have been permitted by the United States in order to offset this qualitative disparity.

⁴⁶Nitze, p. 331. Kissinger reportedly handled this last phase of the negotiations by himself in the administration's haste to reach agreement with the USSR. His opponent in this round of talks was apparently much more in command of the relevant facts regarding the issues that they discussed than was Kissinger.

technique that is utilized all too well by the Soviets, and not appreciated appropriately by the US government.⁴⁷

Other Congressional committees had taken note of this weakness also. In the ratification process for the SALT I agreement, the Jackson amendment was passed, which essentially required that any following strategic arms agreement must not place the United States in a position of quantitative inferiority to the Soviet Union.

TABLE 2.2

SALT I Offensive Levels*

	<u>US</u>	<u>USSR</u>
ICBM launchers	1054	1618
SLBM launchers	710	950
Ballistic missile submarines	44	62

SALT I was politically successful in that it served to improve the superpower relationship. However, neither side came out satisfied with the strategic results. The United States received nothing in the agreement to help allay its fears of impending Minuteman vulnerability, and had to concede quantitative advantages to the USSR to compensate for the perceived US technological lead at the time of the agreement. Similarly, the Soviet interest in closing the gap on MIRV remained to be met, as did its concerns regarding US forward-based systems.

⁴⁷“Congressional Report on SALT, 10 December 1974,” in Roger P. Labrie, SALT Handbook: Key Documents and Issues 1972-1979 (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980), p. 309.

* The Arms Control Reporter, 1983.

Although the United States initially had been interested in pursuing strategic arms control negotiations as a means of constraining defensive (ABM) systems, the irony of this was that by agreeing on such restrictions, the ABM treaty of 1972 served to accentuate the offensive nature of the strategic balance even more than had been the case prior to agreement. The US moved into pursuing MIRV and the USSR to a buildup in its SLBM force. Thus, the result of the SALT I agreements was to tilt the balance even more towards offensive systems. By 1969, US concern had shifted from its ability to maintain an assured destruction capability vis-a-vis the Soviet deterrent to concern over the very survivability of its own deterrent force. This was because Soviet modernization was continuing unabated, and the SS-9 ICBM, in particular, was perceived as threatening to the American land-based missile force. It was the US Safeguard ABM system which ended up being the bargaining chip that was utilized to secure some constraints on Soviet SS-9 deployments.⁴⁸ The SS-18 heavy ICBM, which would serve as the follow on to the SS-9, was in the planning stages by 1972, and due to be operational by the middle of the decade. Its deployment was completed by 1979.

The administration's pursuit of and desire for mutual stability did, as Kahan has argued, influence many of its strategic decisions. Nixon had rejected the deployment of a large-scale anti-Soviet ABM system on the grounds that it might call into question the retaliatory capability of the USSR. Such 'unilateral arms control' measures help stabilize the strategic environment, and in this instance US doctrine and arms control were both aimed at enhancing stability. Furthermore, administration officials advocated the Safeguard ABM system for defence against ICBM sites because this would be less destabilizing than any offensive modernization. Last, programs such as the Trident SSBN and the B-1 bomber were partly the product of desires to improve the deterrent

⁴⁸Kahan, p. 15.

capability of US strategic forces. Also, such improvements as the hardening of Minuteman silos that were geared towards enhancing the survivability of the US deterrent "were pursued vigorously to ensure that destabilizing force vulnerabilities would not occur in the short term."⁴⁹ By addressing problems of survivability, these measures were geared towards enhancing first-strike stability. Furthermore, some of the criteria for strategic sufficiency served to enhance stability as well: flexible options enhanced the credibility of the US deterrent, and maintaining rough quantitative parity with the USSR helped to ensure that Soviet leaders did not become tempted to embark on any political or other offensive.

Some of the administration's policies, however, were viewed by some as jeopardizing, rather than enhancing, stability. The policy of damage limitation, which necessitated force levels above those required to meet the assured destruction criteria, in combination with the pursuit of increased and more flexible options, was viewed as being potentially provocative to the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the Nixon Administration's pursuit of area defenses and missile accuracy improvements might have served to intensify this concern. Kahan has argued that it was Congressional pressure, in addition to the evolving SALT negotiations themselves, that led to the abandonment of the idea of a nationwide ABM system in favor of one of a more limited point defence. Also, Nixon's desire to bolster the US counterforce capability through improvements in missile accuracy may be seen as hurting rather than engendering stability. Although few of Nixon's programs for such accuracy improvements were ever

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 190.

realized,⁵⁰ it seems that this was more attributable to Congressional pressure to forfeit such programs than to lack of administration initiative in this area.⁵¹

SALT was thus influential regarding Nixon's strategic policy. Nixon and his Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, admitted as much when they stated that the criterion of sufficiency would be reevaluated "in the light of new technology, changing strategic circumstances, and the evolution of SALT."⁵²

At the time of US President Johnson's freeze proposal of 1964, the US retained a formidable advantage in offensive systems over its Soviet counterpart. The United States possessed roughly 1056 land-based ICBMs to the Soviet Union's 200. By the time the SALT agreements were reached (May 1972 and June 1979), the strategic balance had shifted considerably, with the USSR then having deployed over 1500 land-based missiles. The US, in contrast, maintained roughly the same number of missiles as it had deployed in 1964, but they had been retrofitted with MIRVs.⁵³

The compromise or tradeoff in the SALT Interim Agreement was one in which the Soviet Union received an advantage in the number and throw-weight of its ICBMs, while the US retained superiority in both numbers of warheads and in systems unconstrained by the treaty, such as bombers and aircraft that fell under the category of forward-based systems. While the SALT agreement ceded to the Soviet Union a quantitative advantage of 40 percent in ICBMs and a 30 percent edge in SLBMs,⁵⁴ the US

⁵⁰The most important of these was probably the Mark 12A warhead, which was retrofitted onto Minuteman III ICBMs. Increased accuracy was also pursued with the Poseidon, Trident and cruise missiles.

⁵¹Kahan, p. 191.

⁵²Ibid., p. 192.

⁵³Barton, p. 148.

⁵⁴Interim Agreement Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Certain Measures With Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, Article I.

administration found this acceptable for the following reasons: the agreement did not include strategic bombers, a category in which the United States enjoyed a decisive advantage; the US still possessed more than twice as many warheads as the USSR; and it was assumed by most in the US defence community that the US retained a decisive qualitative and technological advantage in its strategic weapons systems - especially SLBMs, MIRVs, and in missile accuracy.⁵⁵ Also, US forward based systems⁵⁶ were not included in the agreement.

Although SALT was an obvious political victory for each of the signatories to the agreement, both harbored concerns regarding the strategic dimensions of the treaty. Of particular concern to the United States was the quantitative advantage in ICBMs ceded to the USSR in lieu of American geographic and technological advantages. Similarly, the US had hoped to be more effective in constraining Soviet heavy ICBM potential. While the initial primary US objective of an ABM agreement had been achieved at SALT (which eventually limited each side to one installation), it had come at a rather costly price - the channeling of the strategic competition into the realm of offensive systems. In the age of MIRV technology, the USSR would soon be able to exploit this given the substantially higher ceilings on its ICBMs and SLBMs than on those of the United States.

Since the USSR possessed at this time between a four- and six-to-one advantage in throwweight, Soviet quantitative superiority could be translated into a much more ominous form were the USSR to MIRV these missiles in the future. While some had advocated throwweight restrictions going into the SALT I negotiations, the US State Department and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) were against the

⁵⁵Paul H. Nitze, James E. Dougherty and Francis X. Kane, The Fateful Ends and Shades of SALT: Past...Present...And Yet To Come? (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, Inc., 1979), p. 11.

⁵⁶Forward based systems are those US forces (usually intermediate-range missiles, fighters and bombers) that were/are deployed in or near Europe.

idea, arguing that "anything that complicated would be hard to negotiate." As Nitze's technical advisor T.K. Jones observed, "To the diplomats, negotiability was more important than defining dimensions which would actually achieve the stated purpose of the negotiations."⁵⁷

The overall impact of SALT on strategic stability is difficult to discern. As it is likely that the pursuit of certain weapons programs was stimulated out of a desire for bargaining leverage in the negotiations, and since the agreement did not include a MIRV ban, it might be viewed as destabilizing. At the same time, however, the negotiations did influence Nixon's decision to halt the pursuit of an ABM defence, in addition to lessening the necessity of retaining quantitative parity with the USSR in every strategic category. Thus, Nixon's modifications to the sufficiency criterion can be seen as having "strengthen(ed) the stabilizing elements of the administration's doctrine".⁵⁸ These included the pursuit of increased accuracy in warheads and ICBMs in particular and the broadening of US strategic response options in general, the idea being to introduce a greater degree of flexibility into US response options.

In retrospect, it seems obvious that, at least politically, there was a prerequisite of rough strategic parity between the two superpowers before the Soviet Union would enter into any significant dialogue with the United States concerning strategic arms limitation. While SALT might be viewed as a political victory, particularly for the USSR, the same cannot necessarily be said for the substance of the agreements themselves - they tended to reflect restrictions on systems that were of little interest to either side, such as ABMs, and excluded restrictions on areas of future technological and strategic significance, as with MIRVs.⁵⁹ The agreements did, however, reflect Nixon's

⁵⁷Callahan, p. 340.

⁵⁸Kahan, p. 192.

⁵⁹Barton, p. 154.

doctrine of strategic sufficiency, as an assured second-strike force seemed to be all that each side required in order to ensure a stable deterrent relationship. The greatest dimension of the agreements has been universally acknowledged to be the ABM treaty, which codified the US belief that such systems were inherently destabilizing and would only serve to fuel the arms dynamic. Thus, there seemed to be agreement between the two sides regarding strategic defences (although for different reasons) that did not carry over into the offensive realm.⁶⁰ The United States, at least, seemed to view the agreement as the prelude to a new round of strategic force modernization. Weapons systems such as the cruise missile, the MX ICBM and the Trident SLBM could now be justified and defended as necessary bargaining chips for SALT II.

Some critics of the agreement have charged that the US did not follow a stringent negotiating strategy at SALT that was designed to extract concessions from the Soviet Union, but instead viewed SALT as a cooperative rather than a competitive effort.⁶¹ There seemed to exist no general consensus within the US Administration as to what the negotiating tactics should be. Not surprisingly, not only were negotiations going on between the two delegations, but also between the two governments as well, as evidenced by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's frequent use of the "back-channel" with his Soviet counterpart, and even amongst different factions of the US government itself.⁶² Furthermore, the strong domestic pressure to secure an agreement with the USSR necessitated a flexible negotiating position. Achieving a deal was of paramount concern; maintaining resolve on important US negotiating objectives was superseded by this

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 157.

⁶¹Kahan, p. 193.

⁶²Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, p. 304.

requirement.⁶³ As Paul Nitze reflected, "...we never did have a solid US position to put forward, one that had the full support of Congress as well as of the administration."⁶⁴

To those such as Nitze, while the ABM treaty could be considered a success in that it prevented a potentially endless competition in an entire category of weaponry, and in that it ensured equality regarding the development and deployment of strategic forces that would not allow one side to acquire an advantage over the other, the Interim Agreement was critically flawed. Unlike the ABM treaty, it tended to emphasize and accentuate the disparities that existed in the offensive forces of the two sides. The advantage given to the USSR vis-a-vis its land-based strategic arsenal meant that the agreement could be destabilizing if it were not replaced with a more equitable and permanent one in the near future. With its preponderance in ICBMs, the USSR would be in a position to launch a debilitating first-strike on the land-based forces of the United States. In order to avoid the unthinkable situation which might arise were this scenario to unfold, the US would be forced to adopt destabilizing postures of its own, such as 'launch on warning'. The proposal to freeze ICBMs at SALT was, effectively, a proposal to limit ICBM silo dimensions. Since Soviet silos were significantly larger than those of the United States, any such freeze would only serve to confer upon the USSR a decisive advantage in throwweight. This, arguably, was a more credible measure of capability than any quantitative appraisal of missile launchers.⁶⁵

In addition, the Interim Agreement only covered ICBM silos and launch tubes, and conferred upon the USSR a distinct advantage in these areas, since there was a provision

⁶³Raymond Garthoff has claimed that both Nixon and Kissinger "were primarily interested in SALT as a political *object*, to be pursued at a time and in a way so as to contribute to broader political purposes, rather than as a *subject* with inherent value." Emphasis in the original. See Raymond L. Garthoff, "SALT I: An Evaluation," World Politics, Vol. 31, No. 1, October 1978.

⁶⁴Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, p. 304.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 289.

in the agreement permitting the deployment of all launchers already under construction as of July 1, 1972.⁶⁶ As a result, although the US arsenal had reached its numerical zenith years earlier, the Soviet program was allowed to continue unabated until its construction was completed. At the time SALT was signed, the US possessed 1054 launchers to the USSR's 1618 (either deployed or under construction). In addition to failing to address MIRVs, mobile ICBMs, or throwweight, the agreement also included uneven SLBM limits - 710 SLBM launchers and 44 SSBNs for the United States and 950 SLBM launchers and 62 SSBNs for the Soviet Union.⁶⁷

US objectives going into SALT II were much more challenging than those it pursued in the previous SALT agreement. It was to put in place the framework for "lasting" strategic stability. The two sides would have to determine not only which weapons would be permitted under such a regime but, more basically, what the primary features of such a relationship would be. In this sense, it was inherently more complex and ambitious than any arms control agreement that came before it. Throughout SALT II, the US negotiators emphasized the importance of offensive force survivability and penetration capability in contributing to crisis stability. The US initiative in replacing SALT I with a permanent agreement was motivated in large part by concern that the perpetuation of SALT I offensive force levels could, in combination with other factors, lead to a diminution in the survivability of US land-based forces and thus hinder the pursuit of strategic stability. The Soviet negotiators repeatedly responded to these US concerns with the argument that the concepts of "equal security" and "no unilateral advantage" would engender stability. The USSR could never reach agreement with the US

⁶⁶Interim Agreement Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Certain Measures With Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, Article I.

⁶⁷Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, p. 331.

over the idea that the mutual survivability of second-strike retaliatory forces would enhance stability on both sides. This strategic philosophy of mutual vulnerability, which translated into the US concept of mutual assured destruction, was grounded in the American belief that there could be no victor in a nuclear conflict - neither side could prevail.⁶⁸ Prior to 1974, when Secretary of Defense Schlesinger introduced changes to US doctrine, many argue that MAD served as the underlying rationale for both the strategic posture of the United States and its arms control decisions and negotiating positions. It has been compatible with both largely because it is much easier in a military sense to put one's adversary at risk than it is to defend one's own interests.

With limits on ballistic missile defences put in place with the ABM treaty, the focus of the next SALT round, at least to the US negotiators, was to be the establishment of limitations on offensive weapons and thereby the stabilizing of the strategic balance. It was believed necessary to seek greater numerical equality with the USSR in any putative SALT II agreement for a host of reasons. Chief among these was the Soviet deployment of a new generation of ICBMs - the SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19 - which began in 1973. With such MIRVed ICBMs, the USSR had dramatically increased the destructive capability of its ICBM force, and had given many in the US cause for concern regarding increasing Minuteman vulnerability as a result of this development.⁶⁹ The MIRV advantage that the US had enjoyed from the pre-SALT days had now been eradicated, an advantage that had been deemed to be of great significance to the United States. Thus, the main objective of the US negotiating team in the early SALT II discussions was to secure Soviet acceptance of the American concept of essential equivalence, which maintained that, although the two sides need not be exactly quantitatively or qualitatively

⁶⁸Wolfe, p. 107.

⁶⁹Richard Burt, "The Scope and Limits of SALT," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 56, No. 4, July 1978, p. 752.

equal in each static category of their strategic arsenals, the overall strategic capabilities of both should be relatively equal.⁷⁰ This was in line with one of the strategic philosophies of the administration: that when strategic stability was secured through a rough equality in qualitative capability, "warhead-for-warhead" parity was not required. This line of strategic thought had its genesis in the idea of a 'finite' deterrent capability.

As spelled out in the Jackson amendment to the SALT I Interim Agreement, the US delegation sought to secure Soviet acceptance of the concept of essential equivalence, which was the prevailing US doctrine of the time. This did not mean that each side had to be exactly equal in every static category, but that an overall balance of forces had to exist. As Paul Nitze has commented, by 1973 the US negotiating position "rested on obtaining Soviet acceptance of force levels consistent with establishing essential equivalence on all central strategic systems."⁷¹

When the US delegation arrived in Geneva for the opening round of the SALT II negotiations in November 1972, they were once again left in the dark regarding a US negotiating position. Nixon had less time to give to the negotiations, as he found himself in the middle of an election campaign, and neither he nor Kissinger seemed to have any clear vision of what SALT II should comprise. U. Alexis Johnson, the head of the US delegation, was simply instructed to propose essential equivalence and to try and extract as many concessions out of the Soviet Union as possible.⁷²

After the opening of the SALT II negotiations, the main issues of contention were threefold: converting the Interim Agreement into a more lasting accord that satisfied

⁷⁰Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, p. 335.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²See U. Alexis Johnson, The Right Hand of Power (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

both US wishes for essential equivalence and the Soviet requirement of "equal security and no unilateral advantage"; placing controls on MIRVed systems; and resolving the issue of US forward-based systems. The major impediment to the reaching of an agreement over the next few years resulted from the inability of the two sides to determine exactly which mix of weapons systems were to be permitted under the agreed upon ceilings. The main systems of contention here were US cruise missiles and the Soviet Backfire bomber.⁷³ Under the joint compromise between the US and USSR of 1971, it was agreed to defer the issue of FBS to the next SALT round, hence the USSR argued that FBS must be included in any SALT II agreement. Curiously, this demand was dropped when the two sides met at Vladivostok in 1974. Another complicating factor was the Soviet argument that since they had been ceded a 40 percent advantage in launchers in SALT I, this margin must be incorporated into any further agreement. Once again, however, the Soviet Union moved towards a less intransigent position at the Vladivostok meetings in 1974.⁷⁴

By 1973 the Soviet Union had made it quite apparent that it expected the gains that it had made in SALT I to be permanently recognized in SALT II. The United States, on the other hand, was seeking to redress perceived inequalities in the SALT I Interim Agreement. Any kind of consensus in the negotiating objectives of the two sides, if it existed, was certainly less than obvious. With the Soviet expectation that its quantitative superiority in ICBMs and SLBMs granted in SALT I would be formally recognized in a more permanent agreement, and the US unwilling to concede quantitative superiority, it came as little surprise that the negotiations had reached a stalemate by 1973. Matters had been compounded by the ever-growing Watergate scandal that came

⁷³Burt, p. 753.

⁷⁴Paul H. Nitze, "Assuring Strategic Stability in an Era of Detente," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 54, No. 2, January 1976, p. 218.

to engulf the US Nixon administration at home. It was becoming a serious impediment both to American domestic and foreign policy, and to have expected any realistic chance of achieving a significant and substantive agreement with the USSR at this point would have been naive. The Soviet Union, seeing Nixon's weakness, simply requested more and larger concessions at the negotiating table knowing that Nixon would be more than eager to secure a SALT II agreement now that foreign and domestic policy successes were at a premium.⁷⁵ Kissinger, in an effort to secure such a foreign policy success, offered, in lieu of a permanent agreement, a ten-year replacement for the Interim Agreement.

While previously uncommitted on the issue of a MIRV ban in SALT, by 1973 US intelligence agencies were in possession of evidence that demonstrated that the USSR was testing a new generation of ICBMs, some of which possessed MIRV technology. To try and halt this progress, the US delegation at Geneva was instructed by the White House to pursue a freeze on the MIRVing of new ICBMs. This came far too late for the Soviet Union however, for after years of inferiority in this area they were not about to negotiate away a gain that they had put a great deal of effort into.⁷⁶ There was also a discernable shift from the previous US position on land mobile missile basing. Mobile basing came to be viewed to the US as a means of promoting strategic stability in the face of increasing Soviet accuracy and hard-target kill capability, especially in its ICBM force.

Since the Nixon administration had failed in 1973 and 1974 in its efforts to achieve limits on the throwweight of the Soviet missile force, the new Ford administration, in its proposals at Vladivostok, returned to the tried and true format of seeking limits on launchers (also known as strategic nuclear delivery vehicles or SNDVs). In the agreement, signed on November 24, 1974, Ford and Soviet Premier

⁷⁵Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, p. 337.

⁷⁶Callahan, p. 355.

Brezhnev agreed on a framework for a SALT II agreement which would consist of 2400 launchers for each side, with a sub-ceiling of 1320 MIRVed launchers. It also called for a sublimit of 313 heavy ICBMs, for any mobile missile deployment to fall under the 2400 SNDV ceiling, and for Soviet concession on its previous demand for the inclusion of FBS in SALT II. It was also decided that the new agreement would run from 1975 to 1985. This offer appealed to the USSR because the ceiling was high enough for it to retain its existing forces without impinging on plans to MIRV its ICBM force. However, the United States had to forfeit its goal of reducing the quantity of the Soviet ICBM arsenal. The agreement failed to account for throwweight or MIRV verification. Both sides agreed that if a missile possessed a MIRV capability, then it would be counted as if it were MIRVed. As a result of these proposals, the threat posed to the US by Soviet MIRVed heavy ICBMs now "loomed larger than ever".⁷⁷ However, the two sides remained unable to reach an agreement during Ford's tenure as president. In a final attempt at reaching an agreement, his administration offered to accept the proposals put forward at Vladivostok, while again shelving the Backfire and cruise missile issues until SALT III, but this offer was rejected by the USSR.

In his first press conference as President of the United States on February 8, 1977, Jimmy Carter expressed his desire to reach a SALT II agreement based on the Vladivostok proposals. He offered to defer the Backfire and cruise issues for the next strategic arms negotiations in hopes of quickly securing an agreement. His 'comprehensive proposal' was presented to the USSR the next month, and was based on a slight variation of the Vladivostok formula. It included a reduction of the SNDV ceiling to 1800-2000; a cut in the number of MIRVed ICBMs from 1320 to 1100-1200; a sublimit of 150 Modern Large Ballistic Missile (MLBM) launchers - for SS-18s and

⁷⁷Strobe Talbott, The Master of the Game: Paul Nitze and the Nuclear Peace (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), p. 142.

SS-19s - for the Soviet Union (with none allowed for the US); a ban on the development or deployment of mobile ICBMs; and a freeze on the ICBM deployments of both sides.⁷⁸ The main US objective behind the proposal was to halt further growth of Soviet counterforce potential - hence the many quantitative limits proposed. This would help ensure that the USSR remained unable to launch a debilitating first-strike against US ICBM silos. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance went to Moscow in March in an effort to reopen the SALT negotiations, but he was met with a less than enthusiastic reception. The USSR was adamant that SALT must be pursued on the basis of the agreed upon Vladivostok levels, and the US proposal tabled by Vance was swiftly and flatly rejected.⁷⁹

The comprehensive proposal was indicative of a return to the earlier US negotiating objective of seeking restrictions on throwweight and ICBMs in order to avoid the looming vulnerability posed to the US Minuteman force. By placing ceilings on Soviet SNDVs and heavy ICBMs, the proposal sought to prevent Soviet acquisition of a counterforce capability that would enable it to execute a devastating first-strike against the US.⁸⁰ However, the proposal, upon meeting with predictable Soviet resistance, was abandoned somewhat hastily. The US then proceeded to make concessions to the USSR on the Backfire and cruise missile issues. Somewhat curiously, the administration also sought a MIRV limit on mobile missiles, eliminating as an option one of the few US avenues for remedying the impending problem of ICBM vulnerability.⁸¹

Carter's failure to obtain significant reductions in the Soviet arsenal at the negotiating table led to his decision in September 1977 to negotiate an accord that would

⁷⁸Wolfe, p. 221.

⁷⁹Raymond L. Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations From Nixon to Reagan (Washington, The Brookings Institution, 1985), p. 755.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 222.

⁸¹John F. Lehman and Seymour Weiss, Beyond the SALT II Failure (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), p. 16.

extend the Interim Agreement until a SALT II treaty was concluded. This treaty was to be modeled on the previously accepted Vladivostok formula.

As Wolfe and others have argued, "...throughout SALT I and at least the first part of SALT II the mutual assured destruction concept formed the central axis of consensus for the making of major strategic posture and arms control decisions in the United States."⁸² MAD had been generous to the United States, and its various strategic programs and postures, because it facilitated the pursuit of both strategic stability and arms control initiatives, two key objectives of the US. The resultant emphasis on offensive forces that emerges from this concept underscores the fact that it is inherently more economical, in every sense of the term, to put an adversary's population at risk as compared to defending one's own. However, somewhat disconcerting was the emerging realization that the American preference for mutual vulnerability was not shared by the Soviet Union. By 1976, the Committee on the Present Danger had determined that there was little reason to believe that the USSR adhered to the concept of MAD, and was instead pursuing a warfighting capability in accordance with a strategic doctrine premised on the likelihood that the USSR could in fact prevail in the event of a nuclear engagement with the US.⁸³

The Carter administration approached the SALT negotiations from a different viewpoint, seeing SALT as more of an arms control process and less a political one. As a result, it believed that the goal of any negotiations should not be to simply codify a continued superpower arms race, as the Vladivostok accord had done, but rather to stabilize the superpower strategic relationship.⁸⁴ Hence, Carter's approach to SALT was more ambitious in scope than that of previous US administrations. He sought a

⁸²Wolfe, p. 108.

⁸³Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, p. 352.

⁸⁴Burt, p. 755.

reduction in the SNDV ceiling of 2400, a limit on the testing of new missiles, and the introduction of a sub-ceiling on the Soviet heavy ICBM force. By seeking to reduce what it saw as the most threatening dimension of the strategic balance - the Soviet heavy ICBM advantage - the administration displaced the Backfire and cruise disputes as the major obstacles in the negotiations with the USSR. The comprehensive arrangement which emerged remained almost intact as the SALT II agreement which was to be reached less than two years later.⁸⁵

While the SALT II agreement reached during the tenure of the Carter administration seemed quite satisfactory in comparison with Ford's Vladivostok proposal, it left much to be desired when viewed in light of the 1977 comprehensive proposal. The launcher ceiling was lower than the Vladivostok levels, and the US was allowed to place cruise missiles on its bombers.⁸⁶ However, Carter failed to acquire any restrictions on Soviet heavy ICBMs, and the launcher ceiling seemed unnecessarily high. The SALT II levels are listed in Table 2.3. Although limits were placed on MIRVed heavy ICBMs, the United States possessed none; the USSR 820. Thus, whereas the initial proposal put forward by the Carter administration would have comprised a significant move towards offsetting impending US ICBM vulnerability, its concessions at the negotiating table and in unilateral cuts to its strategic programs likely served to quicken the onset of this vulnerability and, perhaps more seriously, to accentuate its significance. While some praised the "equality" demonstrated by the equal launcher ceilings for both sides, this was achieved because heavy bombers, in which the US enjoyed a decisive advantage, were to be included in the ceilings, in addition to the fact that the ceilings themselves were high enough so as to not impinge on any Soviet forces

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 756.

⁸⁶Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms.

already deployed.⁸⁷ When viewed in this light, claims by Carter's administration, such as Secretary of State Vance's praise of the inclusion of the US requirement of a five percent limit on alterations to Soviet silo dimensions into the agreement, seem somewhat trivial.⁸⁸

TABLE 2.3

SALT II Limits*

Total SNDVs per side	2250
SNDVs for MIRVed missiles	1320
MIRVed ballistic missiles	1200
MIRVed ICBMs	820

Numerous charges have been laid concerning the flawed nature of the SALT II agreement. Perhaps the greatest of these was that it would serve to jeopardize crisis stability rather than to enhance it. By the early 1980s, the USSR was deemed to be in a position to knock out approximately 90 percent of the US ICBM force in a first-strike, while utilizing only about one-third of its own in the process. Thus, the remaining forces would favor the USSR, and the US would be unlikely to launch any retaliatory strike - likely forcing it to capitulate before any war had effectively begun. More importantly, as the likelihood of any such preemptive strike by the USSR was almost nil, was the possibility that this strategic superiority could carry over into the political realm. As Charles Burton Marshall hypothesized,

⁸⁷Burt, p. 753.

⁸⁸Cyrus Vance, Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 134.

* The Arms Control Reporter, 1984.

The implicit balance - both sides will know it - will be sure to count at every highly charged juncture involving a clash of purposes. The burden to scramble for terms of accommodation so as to avoid a ruinous war must fall disproportionately on [the US] side.⁸⁹

Others focused on the destabilizing effect of allowing the USSR to retain its 308 heavy ICBMs, while none were permitted for the United States. By giving up its right to such weapons, the United States would have little hope of eliminating these Soviet ICBMs at any future point. Furthermore, the Backfire bomber, which is capable of attacking the continental United States without refueling,⁹⁰ was stated in the agreement as *not* possessing an intercontinental capability. Dozens, if not hundreds of Backfires, were thus exempted from the treaty.⁹¹ In the operational realm, Carter's cancellation of Minuteman II production and the B-1 bomber, and the slowing of the MX and Trident programs were all unilateral moves which were not even used as bargaining leverage in the negotiations. Although not directly attributable to SALT, these decisions did exemplify, to Nitze, "a tendency to subordinate security policies to hopes of achieving arms control rather than to shaping arms control policies to our [US] security needs."⁹²

In the SALT II agreement, although both sides likely would agree that a treaty was necessary in order to bolster Soviet-American detente, it remains the case that agreement was reached because the USSR decided that the SNDV ceilings were sufficiently high so as to not hinder any of their programs, and thus were deemed acceptable. Other

⁸⁹Charles Burton Marshall, "Looking For Eggs in a Cuckoo Clock: Observations on SALT II," in Charles Tyroler II, (ed), Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger (New York: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1984), p. 95.

⁹⁰In order to return to the Soviet Union, however, the Backfire would have to be refueled in a third country.

⁹¹Lehman and Weiss, p. 97.

⁹²Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, p. 360.

US concessions to the Soviet Union were questionable as well. For example, one might claim that the granting of unilateral rights to the USSR in the area of heavy missiles, or in the exclusion of the Backfire bomber, constituted a violation of the US force-sizing criterion of essential equivalence. In retrospect, the main obstacle which hindered the transference of the 1972 Interim Agreement into a permanent treaty lay in the failure of the superpowers to reach consensus as to what constituted 'strategic equality' and 'essential equivalence'. Other issues complicated things as well, such as differences over the issues of bombers, payload, and penetration capability.⁹³

Prior to 1974, US strategic doctrine had remained relatively static in nature, with the assured destruction criterion remaining the guiding force behind the composition of the US strategic triad. Although Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had introduced the doctrine of 'strategic sufficiency' in 1971, this was less than a radical departure from the tenets of assured destruction, although US target sets were expanded somewhat. Regardless, the primary objective of US doctrine remained the maintenance of a secure second-strike retaliatory capability that would be utilized to deter any Soviet notions of delivering a first-strike against the US. Reliance was ultimately placed on a deterrence through punishment policy: a Soviet attack would be answered by a strategic response so massive as to render any Soviet nuclear offensive prohibitively expensive.

Events which began to unfold in the mid-1960s contributed to render assured destruction and later 'strategic sufficiency' progressively less attractive to the American defence community. Between 1966 and 1970, the size of the Soviet ICBM arsenal had more than quadrupled in number - from 292 to 1299 launchers - while the US force had remained static. Its SLBM force nearly tripled - from 107 to 304 launchers. With the onset of the MIRVing of warheads, a heretofore disconcerting but militarily acceptable

⁹³Wolfe, p. 96.

trend became a vital threat to US national security interests. The augmented Soviet ICBM force, newly MIRVed, now possessed the capability to virtually eliminate the American land-based portion of the strategic triad as a result of its bolstered counterforce capability. The American arsenal, because of decisions made during the McNamara years, did not possess the capability to destroy hardened Soviet installations.⁹⁴

While the composition of US strategic forces had changed little in the late 1960s and early 1970s, adjustments were being contemplated and debated concerning US strategic doctrine. Faced with a spiralling Soviet military program, mutual assured destruction was becoming less than assured, and thus increasingly less attractive. By 1966, the Soviet ICBM force was beginning to be deployed in hardened silos. The combination of these two developments - increased Soviet ICBM capacity and attendant American ICBM vulnerability,⁹⁵ together with a more survivable Soviet ICBM force, left the President of the United States, by 1970, with considerably fewer attack options than desired. Thus, in the early 1970s, increased nuclear options were sought - ones above those included under the assured destruction criteria. By 1970, realizing that the United States lacked a sufficient number of attack options, President Nixon recited, in his Foreign Policy Message to Congress, two troubling but by now familiar questions:

⁹⁴Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, Annual Defense Department Report, Fiscal Year 1975 (Washington: GPO, March 4 1974), p. 39.

⁹⁵The growth in Soviet counterforce capability (primarily through improvements in its ICBM force) throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s became the focus of concern for many in the US strategic community. With the majority of its strategic power situated on its heavy ICBMs, the USSR was determined to have gained, at some nebulous point during the 1970s, the theoretical capability to virtually eliminate the US ICBM force with a fraction of its own in a 'bolt from the blue' attack. The US, with a more diversified force structure, and without such heavy ICBMs, did not possess this capability. The fear was that this situation could undermine deterrence because a Soviet first-strike on US ICBM fields would likely force upon US decisionmakers the choice between countervalue strikes on the Soviet heartland (which would mean certain annihilation) and US capitulation. No sane leader could be expected to pursue the first option. Although the chances of the USSR launching such a preemptive attack were almost universally acknowledged to be close to nil, much of the US concern was over the potential political ramifications of this "window of vulnerability". See Freedman, pp. 387-392.

Should a President, in the event of a nuclear attack, be left with a single option of ordering the mass destruction of enemy civilians in the face of the certainty that it would be followed by the mass slaughter of Americans? Should the concept of assured destruction be narrowly defined and should it be the only measure of our ability to deter the variety of threats we may face?⁹⁶

While the assured destruction criteria certainly presented the president with more options in times of crisis than did its predecessor of massive retaliation, Nixon did make a valid point. With the relatively recent shifts in the nuclear balance, assured destruction was becoming very much an incredible threat to destroy cities and populations that, if carried out, would almost certainly be disproportionate to any level of offensive that the Soviet Union might contemplate and/or initiate. Throughout the early to mid-1970s, criticism of assured destruction continued to mount. By 1974 the Secretary of Defense had publicly acknowledged its weaknesses:

To a large extent the American doctrinal position has been wrapped around something called 'assured destruction', which implies a tendency to target Soviet cities initially and massively, and that this is the principal option that the President of the United States or the National Command Authorities would have in the event of a possible recourse to strategic weapons. It is our intention that this not be the only option and if possible not the principal option open to the National Command Authorities...⁹⁷

A few months later the Secretary of Defense addressed this problem, and some possible solutions to it, in his annual Department of Defense Report:

What we need is a series of measured responses to aggression which bear some relation to the provocation, have prospects for terminating hostilities before general nuclear war breaks out, and have some possibility for restoring deterrence. It has been this problem of not having sufficient options between massive response and doing nothing, as the Soviets build up their strategic forces,

⁹⁶Richard Nixon, US Foreign Policy For the 1970s: a New Strategy For Peace (Washington: US GPO, 1970), p. 122.

⁹⁷"Remarks of Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger before the Overseas Writers Association," Washington, 10 January 1974, in Labrie, p. 200.

that has prompted the President's concerns and those of our allies.⁹⁸

For a variety of reasons, quantitative improvements in the US strategic arsenal were not believed feasible or necessarily beneficial to a country now faced with an 'equal' opponent. In addition to this shift in the nuclear balance vis-a-vis the USSR, budgetary constraints and the ceilings imposed on the offensive systems of the superpowers in the Interim Agreement of 1972 all but ruled out quantitative augmentation of the US ICBM arsenal. As Schlesinger also noted in 1974, "...the ratification of the ABM treaty in 1972...effectively removed the concept of defensive damage limitation (at least as it was defined in the 1960s) from contention as a major strategic option."⁹⁹ Mutual vulnerability (the condition) had arrived. Neither superpower could, at least in practice, disarm the other, nor could they limit damage to their homelands to any politically or militarily significant degree.

This shift in US targeting doctrine was concurrent with essential equivalence as the criterion from which force sizing decisions would be made. Two primary factors which helped influence US strategic policy and force-sizing were, as Secretary Schlesinger outlined, arms control objectives and agreements in SALT, and the strategic programs that were being pursued by the USSR. In this light, it seems that arms control was playing a rather pivotal role in determining the character of US strategic doctrine in more than a solitary dimension.

In a similar vein, Schlesinger believed that the best way of moving the USSR toward an agreement lay in making it clear that the United States was prepared to inject a greater amount of resources into its strategic programs if Soviet restraint was not

⁹⁸Schlesinger, FY 1975, p. 38.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 37.

present. It is clear from this that the nature of US strategic forces would be largely determined by the doctrinal shifts of the USSR. What is less clear, and likely of greater importance, is whether this search for equivalence was motivated in large part by the US desire to secure a SALT II agreement with the Soviet Union.

Prior to mid-1974, US proposals at SALT II towards securing a permanent SALT II agreement were in fact in accordance with the concept of essential equivalence. The US negotiating team's proposals called for equality in the total sum of ICBMs, SLBMs, and strategic bombers. Under the 'freedom to mix' rule, each side could design its own mix of systems to arrive at the aggregate total. The US proposals included an undisclosed formula that was utilized in order to determine the destructive capacity of each side's strategic arsenal. This was to be measured according to the throwweight of each's missiles with an allowance for heavy bombers as well.

The criterion of essential equivalence carried over into the Carter period as well. In an address to the Council on Foreign Relations and the Foreign Policy Association, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown stated that:

The use of essential equivalence as an objective reflects the reality that nuclear forces - like other military forces - have a broader political role, not determined by technical, static (force-counting) or even dynamic (war-gaming) calculations of military capability. As long as our relationship with the Soviet Union is more competitive than cooperative - and this is clearly the case in military terms - maintaining essential equivalence of strategic nuclear forces is necessary to prevent the Soviets from gaining political advantage from a real or perceived strategic imbalance.¹⁰⁰

With the emergence of rough strategic parity, the credibility of the US nuclear umbrella came increasingly into question. Unleashing a massive strike upon the Soviet homeland in the case of a Soviet conventional incursion into Western Europe seemed much

¹⁰⁰"Brown Examines SALT II and Strategic Weapons Policy, 5 April 1979," in Labrie, p. 604.

less likely, given that the USSR could respond in kind to any nuclear attack, be it from Europe or the continental United States. A new means of enhancing the overseas deterrent force, in this case through the coupling of US strategic forces to the defence of Europe, needed to be found.

Although efforts at introducing a greater degree of flexibility into US force employment options first became evident in the early 1970s, beginning with President Nixon's Foreign Policy Review of 1971, this shift in declaratory policy was not matched in the operational realm. As Sloss has argued, the omission of additional options from US procurement policy and operational doctrine was largely the result of superpower progress towards a strategic arms control agreement.¹⁰¹ Many analysts and advisors in the United States, believing that the Soviet Union accepted the condition of MAD, convincingly argued that deterrence would best be served with a 'stable' assured destruction posture as opposed to a provocative flexible response-oriented one.¹⁰² The assured destruction criterion lost credibility in conjunction with, and largely as the

¹⁰¹Schlesinger admitted this in his remarks to the Overseas Writers Association when he stated that "the sizing of our [US] strategic forces depends on SALT. The change in targeting doctrine is separable from that and does not impact necessarily on the sizing of our strategic forces." See Labrie, p. 200. ACDA Director Fred C. Ikle commented a short time later that assured destruction was no longer a sufficient criterion for US targeting strategy because "...we [the US] want to dissuade military planners from trying to get a counterforce capability against us which might stimulate them to launch into large programs and thus would undercut SALT. We want to close any gap in the spectrum of deterrence." See "Ikle Discusses SALT and the New Targeting Doctrine, 8 May 1974," in Labrie, pp. 207-220.

¹⁰²Leon Sloss and Marc Dean Millot, "US Nuclear Strategy in Evolution," Strategic Review, Vol. 12, No. 1, Winter 1984, p. 22.

result of, the intensified Soviet strategic buildup of 1966-1970.¹⁰³ Not only was the US deterrent force likely to be perceived by the USSR as a less credible one, but many also argued that a doctrine which virtually limited itself to massive countervalue strikes would be inherently self-deterring, and correctly so.

Nixon's policy statement of 1971 was the first step in a re-evaluation of US nuclear strategy. A study conducted in the early 1970s emerged as National Security Decision Memorandum 242 (NSDM-242) of 1975, the main thrust of which became known as the Schlesinger Doctrine after the Secretary of Defense publicly revealed some of the elements of this new strategy in 1974. The primary element of the doctrine, that which came to be most often associated with the introduction of Limited Nuclear Options (LNOs), was the newly-re-emphasized concept of escalation control. A US capability was required that would be able to influence the degree of nuclear force and the speed with which it was used. Emphasis was placed on terminating any nuclear clash at the earliest possible stages of the conflict, and on terms which were favorable to the US and its allies. To do this, it was determined that a broader range of attack options was necessary. Impending developments in Europe were influencing the administration's decisions in this area as well.¹⁰⁴ By the early 1970s the Soviet Union was preparing to deploy the SS-20 IRBM, a theatre weapon that would likely serve to alter the strategic balance in Europe.

¹⁰³Indeed, Schlesinger himself argued that the US quest for an improved counterforce capability was the direct result of Soviet weapons programs. Although granted a quantitative advantage in missiles in SALT I, the USSR had in the following years addressed the qualitative gap between the two superpowers by developing the SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19 ICBMs, each of which had been tested with MIRV technology. Together they represented a threefold increase in Soviet ICBM throwweight. 'Assured destruction' and 'mutual vulnerability' were concepts that were being increasingly called into question. See Terry R. Terriff, The Innovation of US Strategic Nuclear Policy in the Nixon Administrations: 1969-1974, unpublished dissertation, King's College, University of London, 1991, pp. 77-79.

¹⁰⁴Jonathan Haslam, The Soviet Union and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons in Europe, 1969-87 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 64.

While it is important to remember that the major utility of any strategic posture or doctrine lies in its deterrent effect, this is indeed bolstered through the capability to carry out the stated threat. Should deterrence fail, in Schlesinger's words:

...we want to have the planning flexibility to be able to respond selectively to the attack in such a way as to (1) limit the chances of uncontrolled escalation, and (2) hit meaningful targets with a sufficient accuracy-yield combination to destroy only the intended target and to avoid widespread collateral damage.¹⁰⁵

It was believed that the controlled use of nuclear weapons could fulfil two distinct requirements: to stop the immediate aggression and create a pause or hiatus in the enemy's military activities to allow time for diplomacy to work; and to change enemy leaders' perceptions about the prospects for a quick, cheap victory.¹⁰⁶

By the time Jimmy Carter took office as the Thirty-Ninth President of the United States in 1977, several disconcerting factors were beginning to emerge which contributed to an increased questioning of American strategic doctrine. Modernization of Soviet weapons systems was progressing intensively. Offensive developments, not encouragingly, were continuing in the face of the SALT agreement between the two superpowers. Furthermore, the USSR had stepped up its emphasis on developing defensive systems, both civil and military in nature. This development was even more ominous for the United States, for the ABM treaty had been hailed as the greatest arms control achievement in its relatively short history, largely because it had actually hindered the development and deployment of systems that were seen, at least to Western stability theorists, as inherently destabilizing. The Soviet margin of offensive superiority over the United States was widening rather than narrowing, and the 'window of vulnerability' argument

¹⁰⁵Schlesinger, FY 1975, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶Lynn Davis, "Limited Nuclear Options: Deterrence and the New American Doctrine," Adelphi Paper No. 121 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1975), p. 7.

was already beginning to develop some credence. The MIRVed, 'heavy' ICBMs, which comprised a formidable percentage of the Soviet land-based arsenal, were becoming increasingly threatening to the US land-based leg of the strategic triad. While the US maintained an undeniable assured destruction capability in the face of the most destructive of Soviet first-strikes, many members of the American defence community were beginning to call into question the credibility of the US deterrent force. To make matters worse, Soviet public pronouncements were reflective of an increased Soviet emphasis not only on the possibility of fighting a protracted nuclear war with the United States, but on the likelihood of the USSR and the communist world in fact prevailing in such a devastating confrontation. Viewed in this light, these Soviet actions aroused a great deal of concern in their American counterparts. Calls for a re-evaluation of American strategic doctrine were not confined to critics of the Carter administration. Indeed, top-level government officials were calling for an examination of the US deterrent posture and targeting policy:

The unquestioned Soviet attainment of strategic parity has put the final nail in the coffin of what we long knew was dead - the notion that we could adequately deter the Soviets solely by threatening massive retaliation against their cities.¹⁰⁷

US Secretary of Defense Harold Brown was even more forthright in his Newport Address of August 1980, his first unveiling of the 'new' American strategy: "The increase in Soviet strategic capability over the past decade and our concern that the Soviets may not believe that nuclear war is unwinnable, dictate a US need for more - and more selective - retaliatory options."¹⁰⁸

The Carter Administration undertook an extensive review of US doctrine and defence policy in 1977. The initial review led to the promulgation of Presidential

¹⁰⁷Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1982 (Washington: GPO), p. 39.

¹⁰⁸Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, "Newport Address," in Bobbitt et al, p. 413.

Directive 18 (PD-18), which essentially endorsed Nixon's NSDM-242 until further review had been completed. The entire review lasted approximately eighteen months, and included a review of US targeting policy. However, central to this reexamination of US doctrine was an in-depth study of Soviet doctrine and strategic thought.¹⁰⁹ From this emerged a perception that the USSR was not only planning for and prepared to fight a protracted nuclear war should hostilities arise, but, of greater concern to US decisionmakers, the Soviet elite seemed to believe that the USSR would indeed prevail in a conflict of such a nature. These aforementioned studies led US leaders to conclude that a modification in doctrine was required - one that took these Soviet beliefs into account.

The results of this reevaluation of US doctrine emerged in the form of a new guidance for strategic targeting, and were promulgated as Presidential Directive 59 (PD-59). Secretary of Defense Harold Brown revealed publicly the dimensions of what he referred to as the 'countervailing strategy' in August of 1980. Stating emphatically that PD-59 did not represent a radical departure from the recent currents of US strategic doctrine, but was rather an evolutionary development of the doctrines enunciated by his predecessors McNamara and Schlesinger, he explained the importance of the countervailing dimension:

The biggest difference...that PD-59 introduces is a specific recognition that our strategy has to be aimed at what the Soviets think is important to them, not just what we might think might be important to us in their view.¹¹⁰

As he stated in his first public unveiling of the strategy:

The Soviet leadership appears to contemplate at least the possibility of a relatively prolonged exchange if a war comes, and in some circles at least, they seem to take seriously the

¹⁰⁹Scott D. Sagan, Moving Targets: Nuclear Strategy and National Security (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 49.

¹¹⁰Nuclear War Strategy, Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 96th Congress, 2nd session, September 16, 1980, p. 10.

theoretical possibility of victory in such a war. We cannot afford to ignore these views even if we think differently, as I do.¹¹¹

It was this perception of the beliefs of their Soviet counterparts, more than anything else, that led the administration to revise its strategic doctrine. If the USSR thought that it could prevail in a nuclear conflict, the 'new' strategy would seek to cast considerable doubt on this belief:

We must have forces, contingency plans, and command and control capabilities that will convince the Soviet leadership that no war and no course of aggression by them that led to use of nuclear weapons - on any scale of attack and at any stage of conflict - could lead to victory, however they may define victory.¹¹²

The goal was to make a Soviet victory seem highly unlikely to the Soviets themselves. Although the above quote leads one to question how this is to be achieved if one is not confident of the other's definition of 'victory', the aim was to leave little doubt that such an outcome could result, regardless of how broadly one might define the term. Hence, Brown determined that US plans, in order to convince the Soviet leadership of this, "should include options to attack the targets that comprise the Soviet military force structure, and to hold back a significant reserve."¹¹³

Indeed, implicit in the countervailing strategy itself is the effort to bolster deterrence across the entire 'spectrum of risk'. In an age of relative strategic parity, it was deemed essential that the United States have such forces and plans for their use that the Soviets themselves, from their own culturally unique perspective, would realize that no form of aggression would be worth the price incurred. As Walter Slocombe has stated, "the United States must have countervailing strategic options such that at a variety of

¹¹¹Brown, "Newport Address," p. 413.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 411.

¹¹³Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1982 (Washington: GPO), p. 66.

levels of exchange, aggression would either be defeated or would result in unacceptable costs that exceed gains."¹¹⁴

In his statements regarding the substance of the countervailing strategy and the changes that it entailed, Secretary of Defense Brown, on numerous occasions, made it quite clear that it did not signify a revolutionary adjustment in US strategic thinking or policy:

...PD-59 is *not* a new strategic doctrine; it is *not* a radical departure from US strategic policy over the past decade or so. It *is*, in fact, a refinement, a codification of previous statements of our strategic policy. PD-59 takes the same essential strategic doctrine, and restates it more clearly, more cogently, in light of current conditions and current capabilities.¹¹⁵

Two main changes were introduced into US war plans after the promulgation of PD-59 in order to dispel any notions that the Soviet Union might entertain regarding nuclear war being in any conceivable way winnable. The first and arguably most significant shift was in the increased emphasis given to the targeting of the Soviet leadership. Soviet ballistic missile (BMD) and civil defence efforts had served to reduce American confidence in their ability to execute successful counterleadership strikes. As Brown himself put it:

In a time of great crisis what they [the USSR] must need to be deterred by is the thought that their power structure will not survive. That is even more important to them than their personal survival or survival of 10, 20, or 30 million, or even 50 million of their fellow countrymen.¹¹⁶

A second area of importance regarded the emphasis on increased counterforce targeting (as regards the ratio of military to civilian targets). The United States had always targeted Soviet military forces, but its counterforce capability was reduced dramatically in the 1970s as a result of a robust Soviet buildup and concurrent

¹¹⁴Walter Slocombe, "The Countervailing Strategy," International Security, Vol. 5, No. 4, Spring 1981, p. 21.

¹¹⁵Brown, "Newport Address," p. 410. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹⁶Nuclear War Strategy, p. 26.

American decisions to maintain static force levels in the US nuclear arsenal (which was partly attributable to McNamara's assured destruction criteria). Table 2.4 illustrates the evolution of launcher levels from 1967 to 1972.

TABLE 2.4
Strategic Launchers*

	<u>US</u>	<u>USSR</u>
Jan. 1967	1630	600
Sept. 1968	1710	1000
Nov. 1969	1710	1300
May 1972	1710	2350

While this plateau was evidenced in the number of strategic launchers, the US did continue to produce warheads, however. The 'new' strategy called for and required US force modernization in all legs of the strategic triad, including the deployment of the MX ICBM in hardened shelters and the Trident D-5 SLBM in nuclear submarines (SSBNs). These systems would help enable the United States to fight a prolonged nuclear conflict, one the USSR thought at least possible. As Scott Sagan and others correctly argued, the motivation behind this renewed emphasis on countermilitary targeting was borne not of damage-limiting intentions (as in BMD or civil defence) of the United States, but rather of an effort to demonstrate to the USSR that the US would in fact be able to fight a lengthy nuclear war should deterrence fail.¹¹⁷ In this way, deterrence would be significantly bolstered.

In retrospect, both the SALT II negotiations and the evolution of American strategic doctrine throughout the 1970s and early 1980s were illustrative of what should certainly be viewed as a disconcerting process: strategic doctrine, at least in

* This includes both ICBM and SLBM launchers. See Garthoff, "SALT I: An Evaluation," p. 8.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p.52.

theory, should set the scope and direction of any strategic arms control framework. Through examination of the two SALT agreements, it is quite apparent that this was not the case. In fact, more evidence exists to support the argument that the arms control negotiations themselves determined the direction of US strategic policy. Although the Carter administration's cancellation of the B-1 bomber and the neutron bomb, or its slippage on the MX and Trident programs, cannot be causally connected to the SALT negotiations, there is a very high likelihood that the arms control process was in fact the driving force behind these decisions. These cancellations did reflect, to Paul Nitze, "a tendency to subordinate security policies to hopes of achieving arms control rather than to shaping arms control policies to our security needs."¹¹⁸

As an example of this phenomenon, the provisions of the SALT II agreement hardly reflected US doctrinal requirements of the time. By focusing on launchers as the major measure of strategic might, the agreement only served to encourage the superpowers to increase the number of warheads on their missiles (through fractionation), which could only serve to hinder rather than bolster crisis stability, especially in light of the Soviet monopoly in heavy ICBMs. The high launcher ceilings also placed greater importance on this dimension of the Soviet strategic arsenal. While the United States has traditionally enjoyed a quantitative advantage in strategic warheads over the Soviet Union, the USSR's heavy ICBM and launcher advantages more than offset this trend. Table 2.5 illustrates the increases in warhead totals since 1961.

¹¹⁸Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, p. 360.

TABLE 2.5

Strategic Warheads*

	<u>1961</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1980</u>
US	3267	8500	9200
USSR	500	4000	6000

Rather than serving to reduce the strategic forces of the superpowers, SALT II ensured a steady increase in them, especially in regard to Soviet megatonnage.¹¹⁹ Although US capabilities were also allowed to increase somewhat (primarily through quantitative warhead deployments), the balance would nonetheless shift from one of relative strategic parity to one of impending Soviet strategic superiority. Essential equivalence seemed to be sacrificed by giving unilateral rights to the USSR, as with the allowance of 308 heavy ICBMs, while the United States did not possess a single one. This shaping of doctrine by the arms control process, in combination with other political objectives that are an inherent ingredient in any international negotiation, but also affect strategic decisions, leave strategic doctrine with a marginal role to play in determining the force sizing of the US arsenal and the articulation of negotiating positions at forums on the limitation or reduction of strategic forces. This was not a process that those concerned with the national security of the United States were at all comfortable with.

*Sagan, Moving Targets, p. 27; Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation, p. 797.

¹¹⁹Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost, p. 362.

Chapter Three: Doctrinal Modifications and the Evolution of the US
Negotiating Position at START

[The Reagan administration] had begun with a determined effort to refine the instruments of nuclear deterrence to render them more credible. By its close it appeared prepared to abandon the whole exercise.¹

The historical record of the evolution of US strategic nuclear policy has, if anything, indicated that strategic doctrine has played a relatively minimal role in the shaping of the US force posture. A much more reliable causal factor vis-a-vis the United States force structure has been the introduction of progressively advanced military technology. However, in the eight years of the Reagan administration, the connection between policy, doctrine and force posture was perhaps more structured and purposeful than in any other period in recent US history.

The Reagan administration that entered the American political scene in 1981 was determined to set itself apart from previous US administrations in general, and with regard to issues of US defence and national security policy specifically - areas that had helped propel Reagan into the presidency of the United States. For years a vocal public opponent to the SALT process and the two treaties that it produced, ones which he would later condemn as "fatally flawed," Reagan was determined to redress the inherent weaknesses in US arms control policy that had manifested themselves throughout the 1970s; ones which he saw as contributing greatly to the increasingly unequal strategic balance vis-a-vis the Soviet Union upon his accession to power.

In his election campaign Reagan had repeatedly criticized the neglect of US strategic forces and defence requirements by past and present US administrations. This neglect had forced the US to negotiate from positions of weakness in arms control and other negotiations. His remedy was to seek 'Peace through Strength'. Critical of SALT II

¹Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1990), p. 398.

and the pursuit of "agreements for agreements' sake," Reagan sought a new direction in arms control² and a revision in the strategic balance. Upon entering office, he initiated a US strategic modernization program that he deemed essential not only to the security of the United States, but also to its success in arms control negotiations.³ Long a supporter of arms reductions, even throughout the period of US modernization and buildup, Reagan maintained that any such measures must meet the objectives of strategic stability, be militarily significant, and improve the security of both the United States and its allies. Thus, any arms limitations or reductions would have to be both equal and verifiable for them to be in the national interest of the United States.

Concurrent with the rise to power of the Reagan administration was a growing disillusionment with the state of superpower strategic deterrence amongst both the US defence community and, to a lesser degree, the general public itself. An impressive and continuing Soviet strategic buildup had demonstrated beyond any doubt that the USSR was neither satisfied with an assured destruction capability nor, more importantly, with the particularly American notion of accepting strategic deterrence as the ultimate and inevitable safeguard of strategic stability. The USSR's development of an operational warfighting capability that augmented a theory of nuclear 'victory' had convinced US decisionmakers of this. The Soviet desire to acquire the ability to 'prevail' in even the

²Ronald F. Lehman II, "The Arms Control Legacy of the Reagan Administration: A Focus on START," Strategic Review, Vol. 16, No. 4, Fall 1988, p. 14.

³By 1983, Reagan's Strategic Modernization Program called for US \$22 billion to be spent on strategic weapons and C3 systems. This appears to reflect an effort to acquire the strategic capabilities necessary to satisfy the requirements of US nuclear weapons employment policy. This policy, which had emerged in the Nixon/Ford years, was developed by the Carter administration and codified in its PD-59 of 1980, which called for the US to develop the capability to fight a protracted nuclear war. Reagan's NSDD-13 officially recognized and adopted these objectives. Jeffrey Richelson, "PD-59, NSDD-13, and the Reagan Strategic Modernization Program," in P. Edward Haley, David M. Keithly and Jack Merritt, (eds) Nuclear Strategy, Arms Control, and the Future (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 120.

most horrific strategic nuclear conflict⁴ was an end that should have been obvious to those in the United States, had not its decisionmakers and strategists ignored the basis and evolution of Soviet strategic doctrine since the years immediately following the conclusion of the Second World War. Western leaders who had in the past sought to “educate” their Soviet counterparts as to the complex realities of a nuclear world now sought to understand the intricacies of Soviet doctrine - a search spurred by nothing less than an ongoing Soviet strategic buildup of grand proportions. Some in the West would, in short order, come to claim that a “window of vulnerability” had come to exist vis-a-vis the bolstered strategic power of the Soviet Union, part of which included a formidable warfighting capability of which the United States did not possess.

This realization that the Soviet Union did not share the same ideas regarding deterrence and stability as Western theorists was not merely the result of years of Western disinterest in Soviet strategic thought. The United States had possessed, into the 1970s, a decisive margin of strategic superiority over its Soviet counterpart. Hence, in this light it seems neither irrational nor ethnocentric to expect a strategically inferior USSR to slow its military buildup once relative parity and a more ‘stable’ deterrent relationship had been achieved.⁵

It was only in the early 1980s that the Soviet Union came to acquire the optimal mix of accuracy and yield in its ICBM force so as to be able to seriously threaten the land-

⁴While this Soviet objective may not have been deemed realistic by all dimensions of the USSR’s decisionmaking elite, it was one that frequently emerged in the various military and political journals and in pronouncements by high-ranking members of the Soviet military at that time. While this was not likely a departure in Soviet policy, it was reflective of the increased US effort to “understand” the nature of Soviet doctrine. Thus, their concern over Soviet wartime objectives might simply have reflected their increased familiarization with Soviet publications and pronouncements.

⁵Philip Bobbitt, “Assessing Alternative Nuclear Strategies,” in Bobbitt, et al, p. 428.

based leg of the US strategic triad.⁶ In theory, a perfect Soviet 'bolt from the blue' could eliminate in the area of 90 to 97 percent of the US ICBM force.⁷ Concern over this development had led to arguments in the US that there now existed a 'window of vulnerability' in the US strategic force, and to a recognition that the United States was on the wrong end of an increasingly unequal strategic relationship.

To the West, and the United States in particular, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) were premised on the assumption that each party would be ultimately secure in the deterrent relationship that was to emerge from the reaching of an agreement to limit the strategic arsenals of the two sides. Furthermore, the US, in signing the ABM treaty, expected that continued reductions in the superpowers' nuclear arsenals of a sufficient nature would continue after the agreement was reached. However, because the Interim Agreement of the initial SALT treaty of 1972 placed restrictions on launchers and not on warheads, and because SALT II insufficiently redressed this, the Soviet Union was able to circumvent American hopes, if not the spirit of the treaty itself, by MIRVing its 'heavy' ICBMs, the SS-18 and SS-19, and dramatically increasing the destructive potential of its ICBM force in the process. This development had the effect of jeopardizing first-strike stability, at least in the eyes of the United States, as Soviet modernization had surpassed the levels deemed necessary to satisfy the requirements of MAD. It now appeared that the USSR was pursuing a posture akin to strategic superiority, one that would give them a first-strike capability.

Soviet buildups and deployments of a similar nature since 1972 served to indicate that the USSR did not share with the West the same conception of an optimal deterrent

⁶Albert Carnesale and Charles Glaser, "ICBM Vulnerability: The Cures are Worse Than the Disease," International Security, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer 1982, p. 70.

⁷By 1983, the Air Force had reported to Congress that by 1989, no more than 1% of US ICBMs would survive a Soviet first-strike if Soviet warhead increases were to remain unconstrained by arms control. The Arms Control Reporter, 18 May 1983.

posture.⁸ Indeed, it became quite clear that it preferred instead to seek a warfighting capability that would augment a nuclear strategy designed to enable it to 'prevail' in a nuclear conflict with the United States. This was likely related to one of the primary Soviet foreign policy objectives at that time: the delinking of US strategic forces from the defence of Western Europe. If the USSR could negotiate reductions in European theatre nuclear forces (TNF), they would be a step closer to realizing this goal. In this sense, the continuing Soviet strategic build up can be viewed as much as a political objective designed to offset the political value of US FBS as it can a military one geared to a nuclear confrontation either in Europe or on the homelands of the superpowers.

These developments served to illustrate the great differences in both the origins and evolutions of Soviet and American strategic doctrines. US doctrine, from the outset, was premised on the belief that nuclear arms comprise the "ultimate weapon" (a concept upon which Bernard Brodie eloquently expounded upon in the 1940s), and must be regarded as fundamentally different from any other kind of weapon. In contrast, Soviet doctrine has been much more Clausewitzian in nature. Just as war and military actions can be seen as extensions of politics, occupying the same politico-military continuum, nuclear weapons share with their conventional counterparts the fact that both are weapons, and as such comprise the potential means to any given end. As such, the fact that nuclear weapons possess such awesome destructive potential does not by definition prohibit consideration of their use to achieve political or military objectives. There was, however, somewhat of a moderation in declaratory if not operational Soviet strategic doctrine that was first evidenced in Premier Brezhnev's Tula speech of 1977, in which he stated that the Soviet Union would never launch a nuclear first-strike, and that the USSR

⁸Bobbitt, "Assessing Alternative Nuclear Strategies," p. 428.

was not seeking strategic superiority at that time, but merely parity with the United States.

It is thus less than surprising that the primary concern of the incoming Reagan administration was the redressing of this strategic asymmetry vis-a-vis the USSR. US doctrine during the early 1980s did not differ greatly from that of the previous Carter Administration. Indeed, this period saw an effort to implement and refine Carter's countervailing strategy. However, the onset of the 'new' Cold War, not unrelated to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and its increasing involvement in Africa throughout the decade, or Reagan's commitment to counter the "Evil Empire" wherever possible, brought a new intensity to issues of US national security that came up for debate. For example, the concern over ICBM vulnerability - what in hindsight seems to have formed the basis for an incredibly sterile debate⁹ - was nonetheless indicative of an administration that was dedicated to national security issues. Similarly, a new emphasis on strategic defence, combined with a largely anti-arms control sentiment (at least regarding the way it had been conducted in the past), brought a new vitality to the strategic debate.

The vulnerability of the land-based leg of the US strategic arsenal had been the subject of concern and debate, to varying degrees, since 1969. In that year the USSR introduced its first MIRVed ICBM - the SS-9 Mod 4. Although this ICBM did not seem to pose a significant threat to the US Minuteman force, it did appear that this was the reason for its development and deployment.¹⁰ From roughly this point on, the US defence

⁹The attention devoted to the issue of ICBM vulnerability by the US defence community testified more to the confusion over what really made deterrence work than any inequality in the strategic balance. As Lawrence Freedman observed, "the fact that ICBM vulnerability provided the greatest cause for concern could be taken as a symptom of the underlying stability of the strategic balance." Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), p. 392.

¹⁰Jan Lodal, "SICBM Yes, HML No," International Security, Vol. 12, No. 2, Fall 1987, p. 182.

community generally assumed that the Soviet Union was pursuing in its strategic forces the capability to paralyze the land-based leg of the American strategic triad.

In response, a discernable shift in US nuclear doctrine began to take place in the mid-1970s, with greater emphasis being given to increased nuclear options and the ability to fight a protracted nuclear war. Most popularly known as Secretary of Defense Harold Brown's countervailing strategy of 1980, this doctrinal 'innovation' was merely another step towards the implementation of Nixon's NSDM-242. Carter's PD-18 had reaffirmed NSDM-242, and called for a review of US targeting policy, one which was to focus on the C3I¹¹ improvements required for the broadened attack options later outlined in his PD-59, the most important of these being the targeting of the Soviet ruling elite. Implementing NSDM-242, with minimal modifications, remained a task of the Reagan administration.¹² Early pronouncements, of the administration reflected more of an emphasis on prevailing than on countervailing, however. US diplomatic initiatives, particularly in the area of strategic arms control, were believed to have a greater chance of success if accompanied by a significant US military buildup, one geared towards offsetting the perception of Soviet strategic superiority.¹³ In this view, stability could be enhanced only through such a US initiative.

The major implications for US targeting policy under the countervailing strategy were basically threefold: strategic forces utilized in less than all-out retaliatory strikes were to be targeted on those things it was believed the Soviets valued most - their politico-military infrastructure and C3I, their military forces (both nuclear and

¹¹Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence.

¹²Philip Bobbitt, Democracy and Deterrence: The History and Future of Nuclear Strategy (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1988), p. 92.

¹³Freedman, p. 403.

conventional), and their economic capacity to carry out military operations.¹⁴ As Secretary Brown reiterated in his 1981 Report:

In our planning, we take full account of the fact that the things highly valued by the Soviet leadership appear to include not only the lives and prosperity of the Soviet Union, but the military, industrial and political sources of power of the regime itself.¹⁵

The strategy required several changes to US forces in order for it to be implemented effectively. An American capability to fight a protracted nuclear war also necessitated greater requirements vis-a-vis US C3I systems. To effectively carry out the missions outlined in the strategy, the existing US system would have to be almost completely revamped, as greater importance was now bestowed upon a highly survivable C3I network. Under the countervailing strategy, C3I systems would have to be "at least as survivable as the strategic forces they support."¹⁶ Furthermore, the strategy necessitated the deployment of several new weapons systems, most notably the MX and Trident, in addition to air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs).

Whether or not the new options unveiled in the countervailing strategy would serve to retard any escalation in a nuclear conflict cannot be known, short of a major failure in deterrence. Regardless, the obvious neglect of the critical dimension of war termination from any pronouncements (official or unofficial) regarding the substance of the strategy leads one to wonder whether the strategy would amount to anything more, in the words of Colin Gray, than "suicide on the installment plan."¹⁷

¹⁴Walter Slocombe, "The Countervailing Strategy," International Security, Vol. 5, No. 4, Spring 1981, p. 23.

¹⁵Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, Annual Defense Department Report, Fiscal Year 1982 (Washington: GPO), p. 62.

¹⁶Leon Sloss and Marc Dean Millot, "US Nuclear Strategy in Evolution," Strategic Review, Vol. 12, No. 1, Winter 1984, p. 24.

¹⁷Colin S. Gray, "Targeting Problems for Central War," in Desmond Ball and Jeffrey Richelson (eds), Strategic Nuclear Targeting (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 176.

The shift away from reliance on MAD had been evidenced in the 1970s. Schlesinger's limited nuclear options (LNOs) had been promulgated in NSDM-242 of 1974. Brown's PD-59, with its emphasis on countervailing Soviet nuclear capabilities, was an initiative that was adopted by the Reagan administration in 1981. Its strategic modernization program announced in the same year sought to operationalize this strategic objective by bringing the US nuclear arsenal into line with policy. Most of the Carter administration's strategic programs were continued: 100 MX ICBMs to be deployed in hardened silos, the ALCM and SLCM programs, the Trident D-5 SLBM, and the upgrading of US C3I capabilities for the ability to manage a protracted nuclear engagement with the USSR. The B-1 bomber was also rescued by Reagan.¹⁸

In addition to being able to fight a protracted nuclear war, the Reagan Administration, like its predecessors, continued the movement towards developing greater targeting and warfighting options. With Reagan disenchanted with the state of the nuclear balance and facing a continuing Soviet buildup, this pursuit of increased credibility through flexibility was maintained. As one administration official stated in a prominent strategic journal:

...we recognize - especially in light of explicit Soviet views on nuclear strategy - that in a crisis we are not likely to command a credible deterrent if we do not have survivable and flexible forces capable of carrying out their missions in ways rationally compatible with our national interest. A threat that would constitute an irrational act, if carried out, is not a credible deterrent. Putting ourselves in a position to respond selectively to limited nuclear attacks can help make nuclear attack - of any kind - less likely.¹⁹

By 1976, Paul Nitze had become the outspoken prophet of impending US ICBM vulnerability. The USSR had recently begun deployment of the MIRVed SS-17, SS-18 and

¹⁸Freedman, p. 403.

¹⁹Fred Charles Ikle, "Strategic Principles of the Reagan Administration," Strategic Review, Vol. 11, No. 4, Fall 1983, p. 17.

SS-19 ICBMs. The latter two were seen as possessing threatening counterforce potential. These "silo-busters" helped spur the 'window of vulnerability' arguments regarding the survivability of the US ICBM force (or lack thereof).²⁰ Less than seven years later, even a Presidential Commission had conceded that the Soviet Union was now the possessor of strategic superiority, at least as far as land-based forces were regarded:

...the Soviets nevertheless now probably possess the necessary combination of ICBM numbers, reliability, accuracy, and warhead yield to destroy almost all of the 1047 US ICBM silos, using only a portion of their own ICBM force. The US ICBM force now deployed cannot inflict similar damage, even using the entire force.²¹

It was generally accepted that a survivable US ICBM force must be maintained at all costs for three specific reasons. First, a US force was seen as stabilizing in the face of an impressive land-based force in the USSR. In this way, it helped to dispel any notions the Soviet Union may have entertained of either a military (such as a first-strike) or political (as in intensified Soviet adventurism, for example) offensive, especially in times of crisis. Thus, a survivable ICBM force would enhance first-strike stability. Second, in more of a purely military sense, ICBMs provided a prompt retaliatory capability against hardened counterforce targets unlike anything offered by the air or sea legs of the triad. Finally, an independently survivable ICBM force could serve as a hedge against adversarial developments in either of the other two legs of the triad, thereby insuring against total Soviet strategic superiority.²²

With the US Congress threatening to scuttle the administration's plans to deploy the ten-warhead mobile MX missile, Reagan created a bipartisan commission of defence experts, chaired by Brent Scowcroft, to examine the problem of US ICBM vulnerability

²⁰Freedman, p. 403.

²¹Report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces, Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, April 1983, p. 4.

²²Carnesale and Glaser, p. 71.

and to find the best means of alleviating it. While the commission found some strategic rationale for deploying the MX, it also helped minimize the concern regarding US ICBM vulnerability, which was seen to exist partly as the result of the Soviet ability to launch a debilitating first-strike against the US ICBM force.²³

While there may indeed be a certain military utility in a survivable ICBM force, and such purposes do in fact add to the necessity of maintaining such a force, one is led to argue that the real value in an independently invulnerable force lies in its inherent political value. As an example, the Report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces (the Scowcroft Report) found in Soviet behavior the presence of such a political dimension:

The Soviets have shown by word and deed that they regard military power, including nuclear weapons, as a useful tool in the projection of their national influence. In the Soviet strategic view, nuclear weapons are closely related to and are integrated with, their other military and political instruments as a means of advancing their interests.²⁴

According to this view, a superior Soviet ICBM force could serve as another political tool that might enable them to achieve their desired goals. The Commission made a further important recognition, one which logically follows the argument of the above-quoted passage:

They [the Soviets] also understand that the success of their efforts depends upon the outside world's perception. If comparative military trends were to point toward their becoming superior to the West in each of a number of military areas, they might consider themselves able to raise the risks in a crisis in a manner that could not be matched.²⁵

²³Freedman, p. 413.

²⁴Report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces, pp. 3-4.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 5.

Whether or not the USSR was in fact strategically superior to the US (however this was to be measured) is a moot point. However, the perception of such a situation on behalf of third states is of utmost political importance, for it may, consciously or unconsciously, have contributed to a tacit acceptance of Soviet intentions and initiatives, in this way according them a status that was in fact derived from a relationship of relatively little military significance.

As the Scowcroft Commission would later observe, the Soviet threat did not reside so much in its numerically superior strategic arsenal vis-a-vis that of its American counterpart, "but rather in the growing imbalance with respect to the more 'usable' parts of this equation."²⁶ The concern was over the Soviet advantage in counterforce potential, one that continued to grow. Whereas a decade-long Soviet modernization program had spawned the SS-18 and SS-19 heavy ICBMs, each able to eliminate hardened targets in addition to being deployed in superhardened silos themselves, the US had remained relatively inactive in this area. The already aging US Minuteman force, even possessing the retrofitted Mark 12A warhead at this time, possessed neither the capability to place at risk such hardened Soviet targets nor the survivable basing that would enable them to cast doubt in the minds of Soviet planners.

In the face of a growing Soviet threat - one comprised of advances in the hardening of its C3I systems, modernized strategic forces, an impressive warfighting capability, and a greater accuracy-yield combination in its strategic missiles - the US finally responded with plans to deploy a new generation ICBM with a significant counterforce potential of its own - the MX (now called "Peacekeeper"). The only way to create uncertainty in the eyes of the Soviets was believed to be through the deployment of such a heavy, highly accurate ICBM. Since the Soviet Union possessed a MIRV capability, in addition to an improved

²⁶Blair Stewart, "The Scowcroft Commission and the 'Window of Coercion'," Strategic Review, Vol. 11, No. 3, Summer 1983, p. 23.

accuracy-yield combination in its ICBM force, the MX would not be truly survivable, even if deployed in superhardened silos. Hence, the key concern for US strategists in the late 1970s and throughout most of the 1980s revolved around the means of finding a survivable mobile basing mode which would be both politically and militarily acceptable, and economically feasible. This debate was to continue through to the end of the decade.

Perhaps the deterrent situation that the US found itself in throughout the 1960s and most of the 1970s influenced the character of this debate which opened the 1980s. While invulnerable to any Soviet attack less than a decade before, even in isolation from the other legs of the triad, the US ICBM force was now relatively and comparatively vulnerable to the Soviet ICBM arsenal, although far from absolutely so. As Dougherty has argued, the goal of these desperate searches for a more secure ICBM basing mode was not "deterrence based on capability," as it should have been, but rather one based on an absolutely invulnerable land-based leg of the American strategic triad.²⁷

Political and economic obstacles proved to be the downfall of all efforts to deploy a mobile MX. A continuously airborne ICBM force was deemed prohibitively expensive, "racetrack" basing modes required the allocation of excessive areas of territory, and the American public was less than enamored with the prospect of MX missiles roaming public railway lines, the concept behind rail-garrison basing. By 1983 the President's Commission on Strategic Forces had taken note of the futility of the debate up to this time:

[B]y trying to solve all ICBM tasks with a single weapon and a single basing mode in the face of the trends in technology, we have made the problem of modernizing the ICBM force so complex as to be virtually insoluble.²⁸

²⁷Russell E. Dougherty, "The Value of ICBM Modernization," International Security, Vol. 12, No. 2, Fall 1987, p. 163.

²⁸Report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces, p. 14.

In addition to saving the President's MX program by recommending the immediate deployment of 100 MX in already-existing Minuteman silos, the Scowcroft Commission also put the question of ICBM vulnerability into the proper context. While a static comparison of the capabilities of Soviet and American ICBMs gave definite superiority to the former, an across-the-board comparison which took into account all three legs of the triad had demonstrated that the military dimension of ICBM vulnerability had been greatly overstated. The years of endless rhetoric seemed to amount to much ado about nothing.

Perhaps more importantly, the Commission echoed the concern over the political ramifications of Soviet strategic superiority rather than those of a purely military nature. The emergent threat to US national security lay not in any window of 'vulnerability', but rather in one of 'coercion'. As Stewart argued, this "window of coercion" referred to "the potential position of the Soviet Union, derived from its expanding strategic arsenal, to direct various forms of intimidation against the United States and its allies."²⁹ While not mentioned explicitly by Stewart, this "intimidation" more often than not involved Western Europe and was designed to secure a longstanding goal of the Soviet Union: the division of the alliance between the United States and Western Europe and, more specifically, the delinking of NATO Europe from the US strategic umbrella. Soviet strategic superiority was likely less important for any theoretical military vulnerability than for the following: the possible use of a position of superiority to influence military actions or conflicts short of full-scale nuclear war; the belief by the Soviet Union, and the likely attendant perception by the United States, that this superiority might be invoked; the effect that this realization would have on the superior power and other inferior states as regards the superpower competition; and the effect of perceptions of an unequal superpower strategic relationship on other states.³⁰ Stewart

²⁹Stewart, p. 22.

³⁰Ibid.

illustrates this argument of the US possibly being self-deterred in a crisis when faced with a strategically superior USSR:

If the Soviets and we [the US] believed that a prompt, Soviet countermilitary attack had a strong possibility of success - and if US response options primarily were limited to slow and relatively ineffective strikes against hardened Soviet military targets or prompt attacks on the Soviet population, industry and relatively soft military targets - then in a situation where Soviet general purpose forces attacked and were on the verge of success, the mere existence of these Soviet nuclear options might cause the United States to withhold any kind of nuclear response, even one needed to avoid defeat on the conventional battlefield.³¹

In sum, the Commission recommended the design and deployment of a small, mobile ICBM (SICBM), specifically the Midgetman, for enhanced survivability in the US force, the deployment of 100 MX in existing Minuteman silos, and for the US to pursue strategic arms control agreements with the USSR.³² The continuance of the MX program was justified on several grounds. Not only was it seen as a necessary bargaining chip with regard to arms control negotiations, but it was also believed that cancelling the MX program would demonstrate a lack of resolve to the Soviets. Furthermore, the US inability to promptly destroy hardened Soviet targets meant that an ICBM such as MX was needed in order to redress this imbalance. While the present US ICBM force was still in satisfactory condition, the Minuteman force was aging and would need to be replaced in the near future regardless, hence another reason to continue with the present MX program.

The SICBM had emerged as a form of political compromise between Congress and the Air Force in the early 1980s, after fifteen frustrating years of failure to achieve consensus regarding a survivable and practical basing mode for Minuteman's successor. The SICBM would have two main advantages over a much larger missile such as the MX. Firstly, the Midgetman, being about one-fifth the size of MX, would be much more mobile

³¹ Ibid., p. 24.

³² Report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces, p. 14.

and thus survivable. Also, since it would only carry a single warhead, it would be a much less attractive target to Soviet planners than the ten warhead MX.³³

Reagan's desire to escape from the confines of MAD was captured by one analyst towards the end of his first term as president:

What distinguishes the Reagan strategy from deterrence based on Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) is the coincident emphasis on the necessity of preparing responses to a protracted nuclear conflict and of developing improved counterforce and damage-limiting (defensive) capabilities.³⁴

As Lawrence Freedman observed, there existed two means of escaping from the nuclear dilemma: by altering the nature of the nuclear threat so that it does not imply the annihilation of all involved, or by abandoning the nuclear threat altogether and relying instead on some non-nuclear method of security.³⁵ Proponents of these positions (who tend to be conservatives and liberal disarmament advocates, respectively) see MAD as morally abhorrent. With the ascendance of the most conservative US administration in many years, the idea of traditional nuclear deterrence, with its reliance on the threat of mutual annihilation, was simply unacceptable. The goal was to eliminate the strategically illogical condition of MAD from the US nuclear lexicon.

With the recommendations of the Scowcroft Commission came tacit acceptance by the administration that MAD could not be sidestepped through the proliferation of nuclear options. Having now lost much of the political argument for the need for such options, a new means of ending the condition of MAD needed to be found. The effort was made to bypass the nuclear threat altogether. In 1983, Reagan announced the plans for his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which was to consist of an intricate network of

³³Lodal, p. 183.

³⁴Louisa S. Hulett, "START, Stops, and Nuclear Strategy", Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1984, p. 157.

³⁵Freedman, p. 403.

space-based interceptors which would obliterate incoming Soviet warheads before they could reenter the atmosphere above the United States. Reagan sought a world free of nuclear fear, one in which, logically, the Soviet Union itself would share in this groundbreaking technology:

SDI sought a Great Escape from the nuclear dilemma. There was to be a switch from mutual assured destruction to mutual assured survival, its mutuality made possible by an out-of-character promise to share the critical secrets of the Great Escape with the Soviet Union.³⁶

Aside from the immense political and technological obstacles to be overcome were 'Star Wars' to become in any way feasible was the problem of the offensive-defensive tradeoff. As Paul Nitze outlined, only if it could be determined that it would be less expensive for the US to deploy SDI than it would be for the USSR to saturate the defence with greater amounts of warheads would it be a sound idea. Otherwise, the plan would lead to nothing less than an incredibly costly race in offensive arms. Furthermore, the defensive systems that would comprise SDI would have to be survivable, otherwise the defenses themselves would be attractive targets for a first-strike. These were the criteria that the US government would use to judge the feasibility of deploying such systems.³⁷ By 1988, budget cuts spelled a long and arduous period of research and development before any system relatively similar to SDI could in fact be deployed. On top of this, the ABM treaty of 1972 was frequently cited by those opposed to SDI, since progress on the Initiative might violate some of the terms of the agreement. It was a matter of semantics, however, as the legalese of the treaty could be interpreted as either allowing or prohibiting such a space-based deployment. By the mid-1980s Pentagon civilians had given the administration cause to "reinterpret" the ABM treaty. Paul

³⁶Ibid., p. 414.

³⁷Paul H. Nitze, "The Objectives of Arms Control: The 1985 Alastair Buchan Memorial Lecture," Survival, Vol. 27, No. 3, May/June 1985, p. 105.

Nitze and State Department legal adviser Abraham Sofaer argued to House members that Article II of the treaty, which defines ABM systems, and Article V, which prohibits the testing of certain systems and components, applied only to conventional, and not futuristic, systems.³⁸

A more realistic means of escaping from the confines of a MAD world lay in the pursuit of arms control with the USSR, and this was the avenue eventually chosen by the administration in its last few years in office. The Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty was signed in 1987, and it was merely a matter of time before a START agreement was in place - one which emphasized reductions rather than mere limitations, as its predecessors had done. For an administration that had at the outset seemed quite hostile to arms control, or, more accurately, to the style in which it had been pursued by previous administrations, it was interesting that it should accord such status to arms control only a few years later.

The type of arms control pursued by the Reagan administration differed from that of its predecessors in two obvious ways, as Freedman has observed. First, and most importantly, the desire was for reductions in the superpower strategic arsenals, not merely the introduction of quantitative ceilings of relatively little significance. For those who viewed MAD as morally repugnant, denuclearization was at least as attractive as a nuclear solution to the dilemma. Freedman captured the prevalent view of the administration:

It was part of the tendency towards absolute standards, against which arms control and strategic doctrine were both judged. If arms control could not produce deep cuts then it was of little value, while if doctrinal innovation could not produce a formula for victory it was too deficient. As the Administration progressed the initial optimism with regard to meeting the absolute standards

³⁸Michael Krepon, Arms Control in the Reagan Administration (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), p. 201; Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems.

set for nuclear doctrine was shown to be unwarranted, while the pessimism on arms control subsided.³⁹

The START treaty was the first strategic arms control agreement designed by its US negotiators (with obvious cooperation from the Soviet Union) to focus specifically and almost exclusively on first-strike stability. Indeed, the overall US objective at START was to reduce Soviet incentives for a first-strike through arms control by reducing or eliminating those systems deemed destabilizing, while maintaining a robust retaliatory capability.⁴⁰ With the increasing concerns of American officials in the late 1960s at the rapid growth in the Soviet strategic arsenal, US arms control policy became oriented towards establishing relatively equivalent levels of armaments. This was the chief objective of SALT. However, START was oriented more towards qualitative parity between the superpowers. Thus, a great deal of importance was accorded to different qualitative categories of weapons - whether they were stabilizing or destabilizing, or 'fast' or 'slow' flyers, for example. The US also tried to get the USSR to structure its strategic forces along the same lines as those of the United States, with the same ideas as to what constituted stability.

Going into the SALT negotiations in the late 1960s, the predominant belief amongst US strategic theorists was that a condition of mutual vulnerability, in addition to rough strategic parity, was required in order to produce a more stable military balance. However, it might be argued that the SALT agreement of 1972 in fact helped undermine first-strike stability by freezing the number of launchers allowed on either side, and not the warheads that would be used to attack them, while foregoing a ban on

³⁹Freedman, p. 417.

⁴⁰Kerry M. Kartchner, Negotiating START: Strategic Arms Reduction Talks and the Quest for Strategic Stability (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), p. 267.

MIRVs, essentially enabling planners to assign several warheads to a single target.⁴¹ The ABM treaty effectively foreclosed the only other option that could help avoid the onset of this condition.

Both SALT agreements shared one obvious characteristic: they were not so much technically or militarily oriented in scope as they were political agreements between the superpowers forged in an era of detente. In this sense, they were more reflective of reassurance towards one another than an indication of a serious effort at managing the strategic competition. While this dimension of the agreements cannot be frivolously downplayed, it is true that, for agreements with the proposed objective of introducing some formalized constraints on the US-Soviet competition, the end product(s) in no way reflected this as a motivating factor for initiating the SALT negotiations. As a result, many critics of the two treaties found little substance in the strategic realm. As Steve Smith once commented, "one searches in vain in the SALT I agreement for any underlying notion of strategic rationale."⁴²

Both SALT treaties had little, if any, positive impact on the superpower strategic arsenals because both were merely freezes in force levels, and did not entail actual reductions in forces. SALT I froze the ballistic missile inventories of each side while ignoring strategic bombers altogether. The only limit was on the number of launchers, which served to encourage the MIRVing of missiles, thereby obviating the original intent of the limit itself. SALT II was almost as guilty of strategic irrelevance as its predecessor, although it required the USSR to retire some of its older systems. Launchers remained the primary method of measure, although bombers and MIRVs were dealt with as well.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 7.

⁴²Steve Smith, "US-Soviet Strategic Arms Control: From SALT to START to Stop", Arms Control, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1984, p. 52.

The case has also been made that deficiencies in the SALT approach were responsible for strategic developments in the 1980s. By 1987, it had become somewhat apparent that two growth trends in US and Soviet forces had, according to Michael Krepon, combined to raise concern over stability and the future of strategic arms control. These were the "mobility and diversification" of mobile missile launchers and the bilateral increase in counterforce capabilities. Solid fuelled missiles now meant that launchers could be reloaded after use (if they were 'cold launched'), and mobility and diversity created serious obstacles to effective verification. The increases in counterforce potential only pointed to the disutility inherent in previous strategic arms control efforts.⁴³

As Krepon has convincingly argued, all three of these trends emerged as a result of the SALT negotiations and agreements, since it was at these forums that the superpowers decided to forego the notion of a MIRV ban, albeit for different reasons. The proliferation of this technology and the threat that it possessed, when combined with such developments as increased warhead accuracy, invariably led to the countermeasures of mobility and force diversification that manifested themselves in the 1980s. Because MIRVs called into question the survivability of one's strategic forces, SALT unwittingly channeled the arms dynamic into other unconstrained areas⁴⁴ (and ones that tended to be qualitative in nature). Prompt counterforce capabilities meant that missile launchers had to be mobilized in an effort to retain their survivability and hence overall stability, at least to the side facing such a threat.

The driving force behind Reagan's defence and START policy might be said to have been the developments in the strategic balance between the superpowers that arose throughout the 1970s. Long an advocate of stronger defenses, Reagan had been one of

⁴³Krepon, p. 109.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 110.

many who had echoed the window of vulnerability concern regarding the land-based leg of the US strategic arsenal. This determination to secure a greater defence for the US also came with what many saw as the one constant in his administration - the desire to escape from the nuclear dilemma through any means possible.⁴⁵

Like its predecessor, the SALT II agreement was designed to achieve arms race, and not first-strike, stability. The SNDV ceilings only served to limit the aim points of the opponent, and not the warheads that would be used to attack them. The impressive Soviet military buildup of the late 1970s, one that might have been curtailed with better agreements, contributed to the window of vulnerability concern regarding the survivability of the US ICBM force. Thus, there were many reasons why the Reagan administration despised the so-called 'traditional' approach to arms control and the treaties that it had produced: launchers had been the main currency of account, as opposed to some effective measure of destructive potential; the agreements included no rigid verification standards; US administrations had failed to respond to incidents of Soviet treaty noncompliance; there was no relationship between the requirements of doctrine and those of arms control negotiations; and there was an ever-increasing perception that arms control was becoming an end in itself rather than as a means of achieving the objective of strategic stability.⁴⁶

It is thus less than surprising that Reagan announced during the Fall 1980 election campaign that the US would abandon the non-ratified but adhered to SALT II treaty.⁴⁷ After initiating his defence program, in 1982 Reagan proposed to the USSR

⁴⁵Freedman, p. 399.

⁴⁶Kartchner, p. 26.

⁴⁷Once elected, however, the administration did adhere to the SALT II limits (in spirit if not always in practice) for the next several years in the absence of a replacement treaty, but only in the understanding that the Soviet Union would do so as well. Even with its obvious weaknesses to the US, SALT II still constrained the buildup of Soviet strategic forces. Abandoning SALT II in the early 1980s would have allowed the USSR to MIRV about 500 more ICBMs and to upload these same missiles, thereby allowing their arsenal to increase by

mutual reductions in strategic ballistic missile warheads to 5000 per side. This would be accompanied by deep cuts in ICBMs (particularly heavy ICBMs) and ballistic missile throwweight. Lesser constraints would be placed on heavy bombers, as their slow flying nature meant that they did not present a first-strike threat in the eyes of the US administration.

After meeting with the National Security Staff prior to the launch of the START negotiations, the US team had agreed that the most important weapons for which to seek constraints were those which could promptly destroy hardened targets, and thus were first-strike capable. This would necessitate reductions in Soviet SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19 ICBMs. Cruise missiles and bombers would be treated separately, given their 'slow flying' nature. Verification would be of utmost importance, and means beyond NTM would be required to enforce any treaty. Last, it was a primary objective of the US to acquire a significant reduction in the destructive capacity of the USSR, although this would have to be achieved gradually. By May of 1982, a START proposal had been agreed upon. Cuts would be sought in both land and sea-based forces and would be in the area of 30 percent of existing levels. The proposal included a reduction to 5000 warheads on each side, with a sub-ceiling of 2500 ICBMs; reduction to 850 strategic missiles for each side in a second phase; and a ceiling of 350-400 on long-range bombers.⁴⁸ This proposal would help obtain the US objective of reducing the first-strike capability of the

thousands of warheads. The US Congress and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were also in support of US adherence to the agreed levels outlined in the treaty. Explaining why he decided to abide by the unratified treaty, Reagan stated that he "learned that the Soviet Union had the capacity to increase weaponry much faster than the treaty permitted, and [the US] didn't." However, the United States announced in May 1986 that it would no longer abide by the terms of the treaty. It technically violated the SALT II limits with the redeployment of a B-52 bomber in November 1986, although it continued to roughly abide by the terms of the treaty. The Arms Control Reporter, 1986, p. 607.B.111; David Callahan, Dangerous Capabilities: Paul Nitze and the Cold War (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), pp. 467-469.

⁴⁸The Arms Control Reporter, 21 April 1982.

USSR by securing reductions in its SS-18 force, since the proposal stipulated that only one half of the warheads could be deployed on ICBMs. Given the asymmetries in the force postures of the two sides, this proposal would have required the USSR to dismantle a larger portion of its ICBM warheads than the US would. If the second phase were achieved, equal throwweight levels on both sides would result.

Reagan's approach at START, in contrast to previous efforts at strategic arms control, focused on first-strike stability. As Kartchner has correctly noted:

In this respect, the US approach to START represented a return to classical arms control theory and objectives, with its focus on redirecting incentives for surprise attack through significant structural modifications to, and reductions in existing and planned nuclear force postures.⁴⁹

The administration's approach to START was based on four assumptions: the USSR possessed or would soon possess a first-strike capability (regarding the US land-based force); the SALT method of arms control had done nothing to prevent or alleviate this condition; stability was best pursued through a position of military strength; and differences in the negotiating styles of the two sides had left the US at a disadvantage in previous arms control efforts. This US position had as its focus four major objectives at the START negotiations: the pursuit of strategic stability; militarily significant reductions; equality of rights and limits; and effective verification provisions.⁵⁰

To the Reagan administration, previous strategic arms control agreements had been flawed because the USSR had not been denied a first-strike threat to US land-based forces. Therefore, stability had not been increased. SALT II, in fact, contributed to the undermining of stability by allowing the USSR to increase the size of its warhead arsenal while limiting US targets (launchers).⁵¹ Reagan made the distinction between weapons

⁴⁹Kartchner, p. 33.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 34.

that were more destabilizing than others - so-called 'fast flyers' that are better suited to first-strikes as opposed to retaliatory missions (such as ICBMs), and 'slow flyers', which were considered to be stabilizing weapons (such as bombers and cruise missiles). The United States also sought to shift the composition of the Soviet strategic force away from its traditional reliance on heavy ICBMs, which were seen as the most destabilizing weapons in its arsenal in the eyes of the US.

The administration also pursued militarily significant reductions in strategic forces rather than the placement of mere quantitative ceilings to the strategic inventories. This was an initiative that was geared towards distinguishing the administration from its predecessors, in addition to taking some of the momentum away from the nuclear freeze movement, which was very much in the public eye in the early 1980s. Seeking reductions would reflect an effort to ensure that arms control served US national security interests, and did not gain an independent inertia of its own.⁵²

Of key importance to the US at START was the acquisition of equal numbers (limits) for the two sides, in addition to equal rights in that neither side would gain a unilateral privilege that the other would not. For example, the USSR had been allowed to deploy 308 SS-18 heavy ICBMs under the terms of the SALT II treaty, while the US was allowed none. Equality was also pursued in the overall destructive capability of each side's strategic forces, which explains the US negotiating team's emphasis on warhead and throwweight reductions. US strategic force-sizing policy was one based on essential equivalence, and this objective was in congruence with it.

Importance was also attached to the acquisition of rigid verification provisions at START, for it was believed that arms control agreements could in fact jeopardize rather than enhance stability if intrusive verification provisions were not included, for

⁵²Ibid., p. 36.

distrust and suspicion might be the result of sole reliance on national technical means of enforcement.⁵³

US objectives at START were aimed at enhancing stability by promoting postures antithetical to those of a first-strike capability. Since the strategic posture of the USSR was well suited to such a role, with its preponderance of heavy ICBMs, the US negotiators sought reductions in those Soviet forces that they saw as jeopardizing strategic stability. Thus, the US agenda at the START negotiations tended to focus on four interrelated issues: throwweight, heavy ICBMs, warhead limits, and mobile missiles.

Reducing or eliminating the Soviet heavy ICBM force has been deemed the major US objective throughout START. This would comprise the most direct route to redressing the increasing vulnerability of the land-based leg of the US triad throughout the 1980s. Efforts to reduce or limit this dimension of the Soviet arsenal would serve the main US objectives at the negotiations: enhancing stability by reducing the likelihood of a surprise attack, achieving significant reductions, promoting equal rights, meeting the requirements of essential equivalence, and limiting the ability of the USSR to break out of any putative START warhead ceiling.⁵⁴

After years of bargaining, the Soviet Union finally agreed to halve its heavy ICBM force to 154 SS-18s. The US, to achieve this reduction, backed off on its original demand of a ban on all production, modernization and flight-testing of heavy ICBMs. The USSR would be allowed two flight tests per year, and modernization and production of SS-18s was permitted up to January 1, 1992.

Also important to the US quest for stability was the introduction of warhead sublimits, which would serve to reduce the ratio of Soviet warheads to American targets. The USSR, however, spurned US desires for direct limits on warheads, preferring to

⁵³Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 85.

retain launchers as the main unit of account. In the course of the negotiations the US team sought an aggregate warhead ceiling, direct limits on warheads as a separate measurement, a sublimit on ballistic missile warheads, and a sublimit on ICBM warheads. All of these objectives were designed, to varying degrees, to limit or reduce the throwweight of Soviet missiles.⁵⁵

ICBM warheads were seen as the most destabilizing to the United States because they were both the most provocative and threatening to the other side and also the most vulnerable dimension of any strategic force. Equal levels of warheads were sought at START, for SALT II, while placing limits on launchers, included no warhead ceilings. As a consequence, the USSR could MIRV its missiles and intensify American concerns about the survivability of its ICBM force. In the end, an ICBM warhead sublimit was never agreed upon at START, leaving the US short of its objective in this area.

By the time the START negotiations had begun, the US had found itself at a great disadvantage in aggregate ballistic missile throwweight in comparison with its Soviet counterpart. However, the negotiating objective of the US was to equal this measure of destructive potential. Limits had been sought in SALT I which the Soviet Union, not surprisingly, had refused. Similar efforts failed at the 1974 Vladivostok summit. The failure of SALT to constrain throwweight had been a major criticism of the anti-SALT forces, which were led by Paul Nitze, later a member of the Reagan administration that would seek to rectify this imbalance at START. It was believed that this throwweight imbalance amongst the superpowers was destabilizing in three main ways: it conferred upon the USSR an advantage in destructive capacity, it left open the potential for a MIRV breakout of warhead limits in a START agreement, and it left open the possibility for the

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 100.

USSR to quickly upload its ICBMs in time of crisis.⁵⁶ Thus, equality in this area was a major objective of the administration at START.⁵⁷

Some significant progress was made in the Reykjavik summit in October 1985. At the summit, the US and USSR agreed on the numbers of warheads allowed and how they would be counted: 6000 warheads on ballistic missiles and ALCMs, 1600 on ballistic missiles and bombers. Each bomber would be counted as carrying a single warhead in the 6000 ceiling. The USSR agreed to leave the resolution of the SLCM question for a later agreement, in addition to reducing its SS-18 force. The US agreed to accept the Soviet proposal of a ten year non-withdrawal pledge on the ABM treaty of 1972. However, the two sides could not reach agreement on SDI,⁵⁸ so an agreement was not realized at this time.⁵⁹ By November they did agree to pursue reductions in all strategic forces.

At the December 1987 Washington summit, the USSR agreed to 50 percent cuts in the aggregate throw-weight of its ballistic missiles. Although this was an important gain for the US, the final agreement was not in accord with its goal of equality in throw-weight. A fifty percent reduction on the Soviet side still left the US at an immense disadvantage - equality remained a distant goal. However, the reduction would augment

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 127.

⁵⁷Instead of throwweight, the US considered using 'survivable megatonnage' as a measure of comparative nuclear strength in 1982. This would consist of the megatonnage that would survive on each side after a nuclear first-strike. The Arms Control Reporter, 1982, p. 611.A.1.

⁵⁸Reagan offered to Gorbachev a proposal to eliminate all ballistic missiles on each side within ten years. However, Gorbachev's condition that US SDI research and development be confined to the laboratory for the agreement to meet his approval was not acceptable to the US. Gorbachev, likely for propaganda purposes, responded with his "disarmament by the year 2000" offer. The Alliance quite understandably reacted somewhat negatively to Reagan's unannounced proposal, for elimination of ballistic missiles would essentially serve to decouple US strategic forces from the defence of Europe, a key Soviet objective. Strobe Talbott, "Why START Stopped," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 67, No. 1, Fall 1988, p. 58.

⁵⁹The Arms Control Reporter, 1985, p. 611.B.350.

the 4900 ballistic missile warhead sublimit in reducing Soviet counterforce capability. By restricting the weight of warheads, the yield is obviously affected, meaning, for instance, that certain capabilities will be reduced (ie - attacking barrage area targets), because the effectiveness of such endeavors is more the product of warhead yield than of warhead quantity.⁶⁰

The US position on mobile missiles at START was one of flux and uncertainty, in sharp contrast to the clear objectives previously outlined. At the outset of the talks, the United States was concerned over the fact that the USSR had already deployed mobile ICBMs, while the US had not. Prior to 1985, the administration had wanted to retain the option of deploying a mobile missile as a possible remedy to US ICBM vulnerability. No effort was made by the US delegation to seek a mobile ban at at this time, even though the USSR was proceeding with the deployment of the SS-25 mobile missile. The stability of a mobile ICBM was attractive to the administration, and it was an option that it did not want to foreclose. With the decision made to base the MX ICBM in existing Minuteman silos, the survivability of a mobile missile remained attractive. It was also understood that mobile missiles and launchers were by their nature very difficult to monitor. The launchers possess a rapid reload capability, and therefore verification of any ban would be of utmost importance. By November 1985, however, the US had sought a ban on all mobiles, since US plans to deploy a mobile MX had run into opposition in Congress, and verification seemed to be nearly impossible were mobiles to be included in a START agreement.⁶¹ The original idea had been to ban only MIRVed mobile missiles, but the

⁶⁰Robert Einhorn, "The Emerging START Agreement", Survival, Vol. 30, No. 5, 1988, p. 389.

⁶¹Kartchner, p. 24.

Pentagon argued that it would be too difficult to distinguish between MIRVed and non-MIRVed missiles.⁶²

The US position on mobiles was thus an ever-changing one at START. Originally applauded by the US chief negotiator, the Soviet decision to deploy mobile ICBMs was later denounced as destabilizing by Reagan. Shortly afterwards, provisions were being made for their deployment and verification under a START regime. Kartchner argues that these shifts resulted from the US belief that the USSR would deploy only the small, single-warhead SS-25. However, when the US realized that the larger, ten-warhead SS-24 was about to be deployed as a rail-mobile ICBM, and that this would occur before the US had deployed a single mobile system, its position changed dramatically.⁶³ In the end, the US had been denied continuous inspection of Soviet mobiles, which they had been granted in the INF treaty, leaving the US negotiators short of their objective in this area.

Based on the results of previous efforts at strategic arms control, and the objectives (or lack of) pursued by previous administrations, it seems quite evident that the Reagan administration was more cognizant of the link between doctrine and arms control than any US administration previous to it. As Desmond Ball and Richard Toth have written:

The historical record of the dynamics of US strategic nuclear policies suggests very strongly that, in general, strategic concepts and doctrines have played very little role in the development of US force structures. Rather, military technical innovation has been more determinate. But in the eight years of the Reagan administration, the connections between policy, forces, and technology were probably more purposeful and complex, and are now more difficult to entangle, than in any other period in US postwar history.⁶⁴

⁶²The Arms Control Reporter, 1986, p. 611.B.336.

⁶³Kartchner, p. 150.

⁶⁴Desmond Ball and Robert C. Toth, "Revising the SIOP: Taking War-Fighting to Dangerous Extremes," International Security, Vol. 14, No. 4, Spring 1990, p. 86.

The Bush administration followed the Reagan position at START to a large degree. After a thorough review of US national security policy, however, it decided that, in order to improve the likelihood of a START agreement being approved by the Senate, less emphasis would be placed on the objective of reductions and more on the quest for stability, which necessitated intrusive verification procedures.⁶⁵ This shift was partially based on the changes occurring in the USSR under Gorbachev and the unlikelihood of a disarming first-strike being launched by the Soviet Union.

TABLE 3.1

START Limits (Phase One)

SNDVs	1600
Warheads	6000
Ballistic missile warheads	4900
Heavy ICBM Warheads (USSR)	1540
Mobile ICBM Warheads	1100

START was signed on July 31, 1991. The basic provisions of the treaty included reductions to equal levels in strategic offensive arms to be carried out in three separate phases, with agreed levels for the end of each of these phases. The central limits included ceilings of 1600 SNDVs; 6000 warheads; 4900 ballistic missile warheads; 1540 warheads on 154 heavy ICBMs for the Soviet Union (the US possessed none); 1100 warheads on deployed mobile ICBMs; and a throwweight ceiling of 3600 tons. At the end of the first phase, which would conclude 36 months into the agreement, the

⁶⁵Kartchner, p. 45.

levels would be the following: 2100 ICBMs and SLBMs, launchers and bombers; 9150 for their associated warheads; and a sublimit of 8050 for warheads on ICBMs and SLBMs. At the conclusion of the second phase, 60 months into the treaty, the levels would be thus: 1900 for ICBMs, SLBMs and bombers; 7950 for their warheads; and a sublimit of 6750 for ICBM and SLBM warheads.⁶⁶

The Reagan/Bush break with the SALT approach to strategic arms control was an obvious and successful one. Painfully aware of the strategic imbalance between the superpowers upon entering office, Reagan was determined to pursue substantive agreements. This was achieved by following a 'Peace Through Strength' approach: the Soviet Union was not likely to be interested in negotiating with the US if they were in a position of strategic superiority, as Reagan believed that they were. With the USSR at the negotiating table, Reagan then sought an agreement that actually reduced nuclear arsenals rather than merely introducing quantitative ceilings to them. By pursuing the objective of bolstering first-strike stability, the United States would be working towards reducing Soviet incentives to launch a preemptive strike. As Kartchner has argued, the approach of the Reagan administration represented a return to classical arms control theory: reduce incentives for surprise attack through modifications to the force structures of the superpowers. This would be achieved by pursuing weapons systems that were highly survivable enough so as not to present a tempting target, while being unable themselves to pose a first-strike threat to the retaliatory forces of the Soviet Union.

A few days after the signing of the START agreement, the two sides agreed to pursue follow-on talks in the near future. In September 1991, Bush proposed that both sides eliminate MIRVed ICBMs in the next START round. In the following month,

⁶⁶Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, Article II.

Gorbachev announced that the USSR would reduce to 5000 START-accountable warheads and proposed that both sides pursue talks to cut a further fifty percent of their strategic arsenals. The first session of the 'nuclear arms reduction group' met later that month.⁶⁷

The United States had responded to Soviet interest in follow-on negotiations to START as early as February of 1990. US Secretary of State James Baker indicated that the US was willing to open discussions. The USSR sought a quick START II agreement that would eliminate first-strike weapons and reduce MIRVing. In March, Baker suggested banning MIRVed ICBMs in START II. In May the US and USSR agreed to begin working on a joint statement. They agreed, at START II, "to place emphasis on removing incentives for a nuclear first-strike, on reducing the concentration of warheads on strategic delivery vehicles, and on giving priority to highly survivable systems."⁶⁸ By January 1992, the United States was considering a cut to 5000 or fewer strategic warheads. At a meeting that month at Camp David, Russian President Yeltsin proposed to reductions to 2500 warheads each with cooperation on a global missile shield. To the US, the numbers themselves were not as important as the mix of reductions that would be sought. However, by March the US had announced that it was prepared to slash its warheads to less than fifty percent of START I levels.⁶⁹

In the realm of doctrine, while the Bush administration also did little to distance itself from the initiatives of the previous Reagan administration, it did introduce a new SIOP, known as 6F, on October 1, 1989. Initially designated as SIOP-7 when it was being developed earlier in the year, it was designed to deal with ABM defences,

⁶⁷The Arms Control Reporter, 1992, p. 611.A.13.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 1991, p. 614. A.1

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 9 March 1992.

leadership targets, and mobile missiles.⁷⁰ These three 'pots' were to be the focus of innovation in 6F. Included in the guidance was an increased emphasis on the targeting of the Soviet leadership, in addition to relocatable targets (RTs). To attack leadership facilities, the United States was in 1989 continuing to develop the earth penetrating warhead, maneuverable reentry vehicles (MARVs), and higher yield warheads. This was also the first time that retargeting options were built into the SIOP. The SIOPs prior to 6F consisted only of sets of preplanned options.

This was the first time that a counter-leadership target set had been incorporated into a SIOP, with the MX and Trident D-5 systems allocated to the execution of these missions. Prior to 6F, leadership targeting was categorized as a 'withhold' - an option to be reserved for the later stages of a nuclear campaign in order to help secure escalation dominance.⁷¹ However, US war plans have included Soviet leadership and command posts in their target sets since the late 1940s. In 1979, the Nuclear Targeting Policy Review (NTPR) designated the targeting of the Soviet leadership and political control system as an "essential issue." In 1980, PD-59 and NUWEP-80 gave an even greater qualitative emphasis to this objective.⁷²

While the START agreement has represented an approach to arms control that is to be applauded, especially in contrast to that of its predecessors, there are a few troubling dimensions of the agreement itself and of the resultant US force posture in general that might hinder the pursuit of enhanced stability. In some measures, the post-START US ICBM force might be considered more vulnerable than it was prior to the agreement. Since US silos will be reduced at a rate more rapid than that of Soviet warheads, the ratio of these warheads to US silos could very well increase under a START

⁷⁰Ibid., 23 July 1989.

⁷¹Ball and Toth, p. 75.

⁷²Ibid., p. 72.

regime, a concern that Henry Kissinger has voiced.⁷³ However, such is to be expected from an agreement of such scope. More ominous for the United States are the divergent paths the two superpowers had sought in their quest for stability. While the USSR, in pursuit of its own vision of the optimal deterrent posture, had deployed two types of mobile ICBMs, hardened its ICBM silos, and progressed towards the incorporation of strategic defences into its strategic posture, the US had chosen instead to forego these options and to rely on arms control instead to achieve its vision of strategic stability. However, as Kartchner has argued, "Without the requisite negotiating capital to purchase equitable reductions in Soviet ICBM warheads and ballistic missile throwweight, the US quest for stability through START cannot help but fall short of the mark."⁷⁴

In summation, the prominence accorded to strategic arms talks in general, and START in particular, was reflective of an effort at filling a vacuum in the overall US-Soviet relationship. SALT I and SALT II were efforts to bolster detente in a time of superpower confrontation. START, while being a more strategically sound and significant treaty was, however, realizable precisely because the Cold War superpower confrontation had abated. As dictated by the arms control paradox, relevant agreements become achievable when they are of little necessity. This is why SALT I and SALT II were of questionable strategic importance, although they carried much political value.

Public, high-profile negotiations have served as measures to reassure Western publics about the stability of the nuclear balance and the superpower relationship, and to demonstrate to them that the risks of nuclear war were being adequately controlled.⁷⁵

⁷³Einhorn, p. 397.

⁷⁴Kartchner, p. 165.

⁷⁵Robert Einhorn, "Revising the START Process," *Survival*, Vol. 32, No. 6, November/December 1990, p. 501.

Formalized arms control agreements are no longer required for this task: defence budgets are being scaled down, unilateral force reductions are taking place, and the Cold War and its attendant tensions have dissipated. Western publics more than likely realize that the probability of war breaking out is very remote. In this sense, strategic arms control possesses much less political value, or comforting effect, than it has in the past.

Chapter Four: Arms Control in a Changing Geopolitical Environment

It is with this process [of greatly improved political relations] that the history of the [START] treaty is linked. In my view, a strategic offensive arms treaty in its present form was simply impossible under the conditions of the Cold War. Its symbolic and political significance lies precisely here.¹

The official responsible for the above-mentioned comment probably did not realize it at the time, but this pro-arms control statement serves as more of an indictment of the process than anything else. Although he is correct - a treaty in the form of START was certainly impossible during the years of the Cold War - the reason that one was achievable in 1991 was precisely because of the dissipation of the Cold War. The large-scale reductions that were achieved with the signing of this agreement were realizable only because of the improvement in the superpower relationship. This has been referred to as the central paradox of arms control. If one accepts the premise that the main purpose of arms control is to prevent the outbreak of war, then it is rather evident that arms control should be most relevant to states that are hostile toward one another. However, theory is not in congruence with practice here. The more likely two states are to come to a clash of arms, the smaller are the prospects for reaching substantive and significant agreements. When substantive arms control is possible, it is because, as George Will has stated, it is irrelevant. While it might appear tautological, Colin Gray's observation is the correct one: "In the international political framework of the early 1990s, arms control is as relatively easy to achieve as it is close to irrelevant. Indeed, that relative ease is proof of its irrelevance."² The strategic arms control agreements that were signed during the Cold War were, in adherence to the paradox, relatively meaningless. Neither SALT treaty served to redress the strategic buildups of

¹Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Alexei Obukhov, quoted in Colin S. Gray, House of Cards: Why Arms Control Must Fail (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 19.

²Gray, House of Cards, p. 39.

the superpowers nor to reduce the likelihood of war. In fact, the opposite could be argued with a greater probability of success. It is thus obvious that, good or bad, strategic arms control was a variable dependent on the political climate. Given that it emerged in the era of political detente amongst the superpowers, it is inherently political, as detente was. Outside of that climate, strategic arms control possesses even less utility than it did at that time. The only exception to this were the negotiations which led to the START treaty, which, under US presidents Reagan and Bush, reflected a new US approach to arms control. Regardless, it is not an accident that the agreement was realized in 1991 and not in 1981. As Kenneth Adelman had observed, by the time of its signing, "START's main objective, enhancing strategic stability, had already been done - not by a recondite treatise - but by a geopolitical revolution throughout the Soviet empire."³

I

The end of the Cold War has had a devastating effect on arms control, particularly in its strategic form. Arms control theory emerged amidst Cold War hostilities in the 1960s, and its theoretical foundation was developed in this political context. Some argue that it has now become divorced from this classical foundation, and means different things to different people. As James Fergusson has written, "It has become both an end in itself and a political symbol which may be manipulated to advance the political interests of states. In other words, arms control has become a simple manifestation of statecraft: the diplomacy of weapons."⁴

Arms control came to be associated with political stability in interstate relations for a variety of reasons. Chief among these was its increasing identification with

³Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴James Fergusson, "The Changing Arms Control Agenda: New Meanings, New Players," Arms Control, Vol. 12, No. 2, September 1991, p. 191.

disarmament. While the two are radically different concepts designed to achieve very distinct ends, arms control came to be viewed as a means of achieving disarmament itself. The result of this was that "arms control as disarmament" came to secure a great deal of public support for the process. Second, arms control became important to the NATO Alliance. In the age of detente, "arms control as a symbol of detente tied arms control to vital European interests."⁵ Its association with reduced political tensions and improved superpower relations in general meant greater security in the eyes of Western Europe. It also served as a means for the allies to gain greater influence in the US-Soviet relationship.

With the achievement of the SALT agreements at the height of the political detente between the superpowers, arms control became inextricably connected to the notion of improved political relations, and it eventually became synonymous with detente itself. It came to be seen as a means of alleviating the hostile relationship between the superpowers, when in fact their strategic competition was merely a manifestation of this. Negotiations and agreements thus became political ends, as they were seen as improving the relationship. Logically, by the 1980s this overly political and public perception of arms control became a reason for states to utilize it as a tool to advance their interests in the international political arena. It had become a piece to be played in the various propaganda wars between states at this time. This is not to mention the status it received as a means of justifying weapons modernization programs. Indeed, many such systems were said to be necessary in order to secure progress in arms control forums themselves.

The SALT agreements of 1972 and 1979 serve better as examples of how not to pursue arms control agreements than as efforts at managing the strategic competition. Both treaties (the latter of which was never consented to by the US Senate) shared one

⁵Ibid., p. 192.

obvious characteristic: they were not so much technically or militarily oriented in scope as they were political agreements between the two superpowers forged in an era of detente. In this sense, they were more reflective of an effort at maintaining communication and improved relations between one another than they were serious efforts at constraining the strategic competition between the US and USSR. While this dimension of the agreements cannot be frivolously downplayed, it is true that, for agreements with the proposed objective of introducing some formalized constraints on the superpower competition, the end products in no way reflected this as a motivating factor for the seeking of controls on strategic arms development and deployment.⁶

The ABM treaty, which is frequently hailed as the most significant arms control treaty ever negotiated, has also served to constrain US defence options in pursuit of strategic stability by shifting the strategic competition to the offensive realm. With the end of the Cold War and the subsequent reductions in the offensive forces of the superpowers, some form of ABM could have a stabilizing role to play in the maintenance of a survivable second-strike capability for the United States. The success of the ABM treaty must also be viewed with the realization that the Soviet Union quite obviously violated it almost from the moment of its inception. While a strictly offensive strategic competition might have been appropriate for the Cold War environment, the strategic capabilities necessitated by the relatively recent changes in the international arena might indeed include some of a defensive nature.

The American propensity for pursuing strategic arms control for reasons other than those of strategic concern only served to compound the problem of acquiring legitimacy and credibility for a process which, if pursued for the right reasons, and in the proper manner, can potentially have some tangible benefits. By delivering high-

⁶See Russ P. Tychonick, "START and the Nuclear Future," Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies Datalink, No. 38, March 1993.

profile, made for public consumption agreements like SALT I and II, however, the United States only served to further disillusion those encouraged by the reaching of such 'substantive' agreements between the superpowers. The negotiations became publicity-oriented forums which contributed to the mistaken perception that strategic arms control could help eradicate the superpower competition, whereas the best it could do was to introduce some constraints on its main symptom - the military competition between them.

Neither the SALT I agreement of 1972 and its associated protocols nor the unratified SALT II treaty of 1979 had any profound effect on US or Soviet strategic forces. SALT I codified restrictions on weapons systems that were not likely to be pursued by either side, such as ABMs, and it excluded restrictions on areas of future technological significance, such as MIRVs. The provisions in SALT II did not reflect the prevailing US doctrine of the time. Its quantitative focus on strategic launchers led the US and USSR to upload their missiles by MIRVing them, thus allowing each side to circumvent the purpose of the agreement and jeopardizing stability in the process. Soviet megatonnage continued to increase steadily after SALT II was signed, even with the USSR's adherence to the treaty limits. Both agreements were essentially codifications of the strategic status quo, especially in the case of the United States. Not only were the quantitative ceilings that were introduced sufficiently high so as to render them strategically insignificant, but the fact that strategic launchers were used as the unit of measurement served only to encourage each side to MIRV its warheads, as there were little or no limits in this area.⁷ Thus the agreements, and SALT I in particular, amounted

⁷This focus on SNDVs in the SALT treaties, combined with the absence of a MIRV ban, helped to create perhaps a more unstable strategic situation than one that would have existed in the absence of any limitations whatsoever. These two factors led each side to MIRV its warheads to an even greater degree than they had previously, and this had the effect of making ICBMs not only more threatening to the opponent, but also, and perhaps more importantly, making their own ICBMs more attractive targets to the other side. In this light, the US concern over the vulnerability of its land-based missile force can be seen as originating from the

to little more than a rechanneling of the arms dynamic into weapons systems unconstrained by formal agreement. In this way, it is not difficult to conclude that SALT I contributed to the undermining of stability. SALT II, although it included a MIRV sublimit, was still guilty of insufficiently redressing this critical weakness. The USSR went on to MIRV its SS-18 and SS-19 heavy ICBMs, dramatically increasing their destructive force in the process and, more ominously, setting in motion in the United States the understandable concern regarding the attendant vulnerability concerns regarding the land-based leg of its strategic triad. Although the US still possessed approximately twice as many warheads as the USSR by the late 1970s (8500 to 4000 in 1977; 9000 to 6000 in 1980), they were deployed on a considerably smaller number of launchers, thus making each SNDV that much more vulnerable a target. When combined with the Soviet preponderance in heavy ICBMs, these strategic realities constituted cause for concern to the United States at the time. The ABM treaty, which accompanied the SALT I agreements, foreclosed the only possible avenue of remedy for this dilemma - that of ballistic missile defence.

The central problem with the SALT I and II agreements was that they sought to secure arms race and not first-strike stability. The SNDV ceilings only served to limit the target points to the adversary, and not the warheads which would be utilized to strike them, given the absence of a MIRV ban. Thus, the US quest for arms race stability at SALT only served to jeopardize first-strike stability, an area of considerably greater import that was unfortunately ignored.

The START agreement, in stark contrast to its predecessors in the strategic realm, was the first designed to secure actual reductions in the superpower strategic arsenals.

tendency of the superpowers to move in this direction in strategic arms negotiations in the early 1970s.

It also shifted the focus of effort towards enhancing first-strike stability. One of the primary objectives of US negotiators at START was the securing of significant reductions in those weapons systems deemed to be detrimental to stability, and the promotion of those believed to enhance it. US attention thus focused on reducing 'fast-flyers' and on promoting 'slow-flyers'. START also sought to address warhead numbers for the first time, although the USSR was determined to continue the SALT tradition of recognizing SNDVs as the main units of account. These innovations in strategic arms control were the product of the Reagan administration, which for the first time in US history tried to shape arms control policy according to doctrinal requirements, rather than vice versa. While START might be written off as just another arms control agreement, at least it can be said that it represented arms control as it ought to be pursued, and certainly not as it had been previously.

While START was a much more militarily and strategically sound treaty than its strategic predecessors, it was not without its detractors or its weaknesses. It did permit the effectively unlimited stockpiling of air- and sea-launched cruise missiles, and it left in place warhead levels that were quite high. Regardless, some have criticized the reason for the cuts in forces rather than the reductions themselves. Concern was growing that cuts in forces were being driven more by political and economic concerns than by the process of arms control.⁸

The SALT-START record has failed to shed any clear light on the relationship between arms control and US strategic doctrine. Postwar arms control endeavours have demonstrated an antithesis between strategy and the Western practice of arms control negotiations. While doctrine ought to drive arms control negotiations, and this did occur to a greater degree at START than at SALT, there were often times where US programs and

⁸Gray, House of Cards, p. 129.

decisions were based on negotiating positions, which means that arms control was probably more significant in influencing US doctrine than vice versa. US President Carter's cancellation of production of the Minuteman II and of the B-1 bomber, in addition to the slowing of the MX and Trident programs, was arguably influenced strongly by his desire to secure a SALT II agreement. A few years previous to this, during the Nixon administration, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger had stated that the two primary factors which influenced US strategic policy and force sizing were arms control objectives and agreements (in this case, SALT), and the strategic programs that were being pursued by the Soviet Union. He went as far as to state that the sizing of US forces depended on SALT. Arms control has thus played a significant role in determining the character of US strategic doctrine.

Any US position regarding deep force reductions should be informed by a strategic doctrine that relates military power to foreign policy goals. Doctrine should provide the intellectual framework to guide such things as nuclear strategy, operational planning, and arms control policy. Without doctrinal guidelines to help determine what is and is not negotiable, an arms control endeavour becomes hostage to negotiability and domestic political requirements. The United States never had a well-developed and rigorously followed negotiating position at the SALT negotiations. The negotiability of any treaty always seemed to be of greater importance than the substance of which it was comprised. This gets back to the domestic political value of the negotiations themselves. A Congressional hearing on SALT I criticized the treaty on the grounds that much of the substance of the agreement was settled in a very short amount of time.⁹ Politically, it was crucial to get as much publicity out of the signing of the treaty as possible, and this

⁹"Congressional Report on SALT, 10 December 1974," in Roger P. Labrie, SALT Handbook: Key Documents and Issues 1972-1979 (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980).

applied both to the US and the Soviet Union. Neither was especially ecstatic about the strategic significance of the agreement. The US was concerned about maintaining a political detente with its arch rival, and the USSR sought codification of its newly acquired strategic parity with the United States. Both got what they wanted.

II

With the scope and pace of recent developments in the international arena - the cessation of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the reaching of agreements on sweeping arms cuts - a reexamination is required of two specific areas. First, the utility of nuclear weapons in the present era must be reconsidered. Many argue that their time has passed - they are anachronisms in a time of great geopolitical and geoeconomic flux. Second, and related to the answer to this question is the necessity of determining the best force posture to be pursued by the United States in light of these new circumstances. Those who argue that the role played by nuclear weapons in the Cold War is one that is obsolete have collectively failed to define what their new role ought to be, given the vicissitudes of the present strategic environment.

The answer to the first question depends on whether one believes that the simple presence of nuclear weapons serves to prevent major wars. This author does. By their very presence, such weapons of mass destruction make the consequences of any aggression directed against any state possessing them potentially catastrophic, thereby serving as the ultimate deterrent to the state contemplating any nuclear or even conventional offensive.

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the ending of the Cold War and the concomitant breakup of the Soviet Empire has been the transformation of the international system from a bipolar one to one more multipolar in nature, although few would dispute the contention that the US is the sole superpower and thus the predominant

power in it. The shift to a more 'equal' system means that there is a greater possibility of conflict breaking out in the world. Movement away from a hegemonic system means more equality in the power distribution of states, which means greater potential for aggression (because of the greater degree of confidence in succeeding in any aggressive actions), as there are more areas from which conflict can arise.

Si vis pacem, para bellum. If, for no other reason than to maintain central deterrence, nuclear weapons must be retained by the United States as a hedge against any putative Russian counterrevolution of the Right. Although the possibility is a remote one, a revanchist Russia, one which still possesses massive numbers of nuclear weapons, could rise to pose a new challenge to the West. This scenario is best offset by a vigorous US foreign and defence policy, albeit one adjusted to new global realities.

As we have seen over the last forty-odd years, nuclear weapons have helped to prevent the occurrence of large scale conventional or other wars. Indeed, one might argue that they have helped deter adventurism of any scale. Deterrence has been the most effective when the risks and potential costs of going to war have been great, and when conquest had been deemed to be the most difficult. Nuclear weapons enhance peace in both instances: being weapons of mass destruction, the consequences of their use are almost always too horrific to contemplate. If the nuclear arsenals of adversaries are relatively secure, and a condition of mutual vulnerability exists, then the possibility of achieving conquest approaches zero.

Furthermore, as John Mearsheimer has argued, nuclear weapons have the effect of equalizing the system. In other words, when a condition of MAD exists, power relations amongst states are equalized as a result of their vulnerability.¹⁰ Neither absolute parity nor even relative equality are required for this condition to obtain. As long as nuclear

¹⁰For an elaboration of this thesis see John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," International Security, Vol. 15, No. 1, Summer 1990.

states possess a secure retaliatory capability, rough equality will exist. Further incremental gains in nuclear might are not accompanied by equivalent gains in strategic influence, although this argument ignores the political dimension of strategic superiority.

So while there have been great changes in the international political landscape, the role and utility of nuclear weapons remains quite similar to that during the Cold War. The three predominant purposes they should serve do not radically differ from the primarily suasive role they have served since their development. First, aside from central strategic deterrence, nuclear weapons are still required for extended deterrence purposes, primarily as a hedge against a resurgent Russia and from any possible threats which might emanate from the emergence of additional nuclear-capable states. With the dangers posed by the threat of horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, an extended deterrence capability ought to be maintained. US nuclear forces also serve to prevent American allies from bolstering their own capabilities and can, more importantly, prevent strong conventional forces from defeating the light US contingency forces that are being deployed with increasing frequency to the hot spots around the world. Second, with the large-scale cuts in strategic nuclear forces that have been agreed upon by the United States and Russia, these reductions might be offset with the deployment of small-scale nuclear defences - as is being considered in the US - to account for unforeseen contingencies that might arise in the future, especially from non-Russian nuclear powers. Finally, nuclear weapons are still required for their primarily dissuasive role as a hedge against failures in conventional deterrence. A smaller US nuclear force can still be effective in deterring the Russian Federation from revitalizing its conventional forces.

Given that it is impossible to put the nuclear genie back into its bottle, and that nuclear weapons are a stabilizing force, one can argue for the utility of maintaining at

least one or two nuclear powers in the international community. Also, to prevent other states from attempting to join the 'nuclear club', it will likely be necessary for these greater powers to possess arsenals considerably larger than those called for by advocates of minimum deterrence. With the costs of developing any rudimentary nuclear capability, in addition to the generally negative attitude of the international community towards nuclear proliferation, such ambitious states are likely to be discouraged in their nuclear quest if they are destined to remain grossly inferior to those states already possessing nuclear forces. As the only power with the political and economic stability to maintain such a force, it may therefore be necessary for the United States "to be substantially in the lead in the sophistication and tactical applications of its nuclear weapons if it is to maximize deterrence of nuclear proliferation."¹¹

One has yet to find any convincing argument as to why deeper reductions ought to be sought in strategic weaponry, especially to levels below that of about 3000 warheads - where the US and Russia would be under the START II guidelines. Reductions below this level would not only call into question the extended deterrent capability of US forces, but would also require a major further restructuring of the US strategic posture. The latter might indeed result from a currently ongoing bottom-up defence review in the United States. This advocacy of reduction for reduction's sake, as if there were some inherent benefit to be gained from its pursuit, is yet another symptom of the arms control virus. The process again becomes an end in itself rather than a means of managing the strategic balance. As former US National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft once asked, "What are the rewards of deep cuts which would lead [the US] to undergo the kinds of risks they may

¹¹George H. Quester and Victor A. Utgoff, "US Arms Reductions and Nuclear Nonproliferation: the Counterproductive Possibilities," The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 16, No. 1, Winter 1993, p. 134.

present?"¹² The US nuclear force structure must still include weapons capable of being used in counterforce roles if necessary, and this means retention of ICBMs, SLBMs and penetrating bombers. Cruise missiles can also be utilized to enhance a more stable counterforce posture. To account for the aforementioned contingencies and possible threats faced by the US in the near future, a US deterrent force between one-third and one-half the size of that maintained during the Cold War is required - one that might in fact be larger than the one agreed to in START II.

Counterforce targeting, although of perhaps less importance than in the past, should still be a key component of US strategy, especially in light of the great uncertainties inherent in the present era. Soviet leaders were deterred by such a US targeting policy for the duration of the Cold War. A similar strategy, although with fewer warheads, is therefore likely to be effective in deterring all putative threats. Missile silos, military installations, war-supporting industry, and perhaps even the Russian leadership should remain targets in the US SIOP.¹³ Such a targeting strategy can only enhance the effectiveness of extended deterrence commitments.

Will the START II treaty be remembered as the last formalized agreement in the area of strategic arms control? One can only hope that this is the case. Although the approach taken at the START negotiations represented a significant improvement over the politically driven SALT process, it seems that formalized strategic arms control has reached its culminating point. Additional reductions would serve only to further jeopardize an already amorphous strategic balance. Not only would certain US options be curtailed by warhead reductions much below the 3000 level, but it would be likely that

¹²Quoted in Michael J. Mazarr, "Nuclear Weapons After the Cold War," The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 3, Summer 1992, p. 196.

¹³In June 1994 US President Clinton and Russian President Yeltsin agreed to detarget their ICBMs from their respective territories. This was a largely symbolic gesture, however, as the missiles can be rapidly retargeted in a time of crisis.

such cuts would have the effect of rechanneling the arms dynamic into other unconstrained areas. US national security policy might then be forced into a modern day version of the strategy of massive retaliation. There exists an optimal level for US and Russian strategic forces, but it is not to be found through the hasty and politically motivated pursuit of formalized strategic arms control agreements. The following was written about arms control in 1991:

Arms control is the by-product of nuclear weapons and new delivery systems, and the end of the American monopoly in strategic forces. It is a function of the evolution of thinking about the necessary requirements for a stable mutual deterrent relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States.¹⁴

This time has passed. The Soviet Union has collapsed, the Cold War has dissipated, and the international system is in a period of tremendous flux. The context in which strategic arms control emerged is dead. With this being the case, new means of addressing emerging challenges to international security and stability need to be found.

¹⁴Fergusson, p. 196.

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