



# U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

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## NEW THREATS TO THE NUCLEAR BALANCE-- A CHALLENGE FOR ARMS CONTROL

An election year is supposed to be bad for arms control negotiations. I disagree. America's arms control policy is sound enough to stand this buffeting of political competition. Indeed, campaign time and the public debate help us to clear our minds, refocus on fundamentals, and broaden our perspective. If this engagement of public concern did not exist, it would be necessary to create it.

One fundamental is that our arms control policy and our defense efforts are complementary. We must maintain sufficient military strength to deter attack and to preclude all efforts to coerce us. But, in the nuclear era, our nation can no longer develop the defensive strength to assure its survival in a full-scale war. Neither can any other nation. Thus we

have another fundamental. It is an imperative of the nuclear era that we and our principal adversaries must be locked in a continuing negotiation for mutual survival. It is this imperative which produced SALT.

But SALT is only a phase in this continuing negotiation. It has to be supported by other arms control efforts--such as the important measures we have taken and are taking against the worldwide proliferation of nuclear weapons--and it must be followed by further negotiations to restrain and reduce all types of nuclear arms. One irony of the SALT process is that our success in calming the strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union can render more dangerous the competition and disparities in other areas. Let me explain.

The equality on which the two sides have agreed at SALT is doubly buttressed. Not only can neither side develop a reliable invulnerability to survive all-out nuclear war--it is also evident that neither side is prepared to allow significant disparities to build up even temporarily. The political determination and technological base of each superpower today make rough equality an all but unavoidable outcome. It is our task--and, to date, our achievement at SALT--to stabilize this equality and prepare a basis for force reductions.

This is the good news that I have for you. Now for the bad news: we have been made acutely aware by current Soviet

actions that imbalances can crop up elsewhere, outside of the boundaries of SALT, and become a major concern for arms control.

Indeed, the greater the stability in intercontinental forces, the greater the need to achieve an equilibrium in regional forces. As Secretary Kissinger has said: "Today, the numbers and destructive power of nuclear weapons tend to produce a strategic stalemate. Challenges below the strategic nuclear level become more dangerous; forces for regional defense--land, sea, and air--therefore grow more important."

As you may know, most of the nuclear forces which threaten our allies in Europe and Asia are not now the subject of any arms control negotiations at all. Today, I want to talk about this broader challenge for arms control.

A brief backward look will help us see this problem in clearer perspective.

In the early years of the nuclear era, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union possessed nuclear forces that could strike the other at intercontinental range. Hence, to reach the Soviet Union our bombers had to be based overseas, while Soviet bombers were targeted on our allies and on American assets in Europe. Similarly, the first ballistic missiles built by the United States and the Soviet Union did not have intercontinental range. So we based our missiles in Turkey, Italy, and the United Kingdom. At the maximum we had no more

than 150 such missiles deployed. The Soviet Union, however, deployed over 700 similar missiles. By holding our allies and our assets in Europe hostage, these Soviet bombers and missiles served as a powerful deterrent force against the United States.

Then, the intercontinental bomber and later the intercontinental ballistic missile became our primary deterrent forces. We, therefore, cut back sharply our medium-range bombers overseas, and we phased out all our medium-range ballistic missiles--by 1963, we had dismantled the last of them.

The Soviet Union also acquired intercontinental bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles. At first, in the early 1960's, their intercontinental forces were clearly inferior to our own, so that their many medium-range bombers and missiles served as a counterweight to our superiority in intercontinental forces.

Subsequently, in the mid-1960's, we stopped deploying more intercontinental missiles, expecting that the Soviet Union would likewise be ready to halt the competition in intercontinental nuclear arms. At that time, our Secretary of Defense said: "There is no indication that the Soviets are seeking to develop a strategic nuclear force as large as ours."

These expectations, unfortunately, were way off the mark. The Soviet Union, through a massive ten year effort, kept increasing the number of its intercontinental missiles until it well surpassed our own. Not until President Ford's successful insistence at Vladivostok were agreed principles of an equitable strategic balance established.

But, meanwhile, what of the medium-range nuclear missiles and bombers? Here the Soviet Union did not follow our example of restraint either. A striking thing about the massive Soviet buildup in intercontinental missiles is that it did not supplant the old force of medium-range missiles. While we had dismantled every single one of our medium-range missiles and most of our medium-range bombers, the Soviet Union held on to nearly all of its medium-range nuclear forces.

Today, the confrontation of all these medium-range nuclear arms, in the aggregate, results in a ratio that is strongly in favor of the Soviet Union. Today these Soviet forces--even though old--still confer a significant numerical advantage over the much smaller nuclear forces of our NATO allies and US nuclear strike aircraft overseas, and against all nuclear forces in Asia as well.\*

Yet, the Soviet Union is now embarked on new weapons programs that will further increase its superiority in

\*Arms Control Report, US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, July 1976, p. 35.

regional nuclear forces. It is in the process of introducing a brand new regional ballistic missile which has multiple, independently-targeted warheads (MIRVs). And in addition, it is deploying a very capable new bomber, the Backfire, which it claims is intended for regional missions only, and hence should not be counted in SALT. Why this Soviet buildup in regional nuclear forces? The allied medium-range nuclear forces confronting the Soviet Union are not increasing appreciably. There is no emerging threat in Asia or from NATO that would justify this massive Soviet investment in regional nuclear forces.

To offset the US intercontinental strategic forces, the Soviet Union can now rely on the balance agreed to in SALT. And against US and other nations' nuclear forces in Europe and Asia, the Soviet Union already possesses ample superiority in its vast arsenal of medium-range nuclear arms. What is the military mission of their new, medium-range ballistic missile? Why are they adding to this arsenal? What--we must ask with deep concern--is the possible political purpose?

SALT is designed to balance the intercontinental forces of the two superpowers, lead to mutual reductions in these incomprehensibly destructive arsenals, and foster development of a calmer relationship. But, at the very time that we bend every effort to curb these two gigantic forces, Russia's strength in regional nuclear bombers and missiles grows like a towering, dark cloud over Europe and Asia.

The dangers of an imbalance in regional nuclear forces are not met by a Soviet-American balance at the level of intercontinental arms. That balance will not necessarily deter all threats and uses of nuclear arms. That balance cannot protect where it does not extend.

In this era of arms control talks, one may ask why all these medium-range nuclear arms of the superpowers have not yet become the subject of some kind of negotiation. It is true that neither SALT nor our talks on force reductions in Europe deal with anything more than pieces of the regional nuclear balance. The NATO-Warsaw Pact force reduction talks (MBFR), as you know, are limited geographically to Central Europe; but the medium-range nuclear arms I mentioned can threaten Central Europe from Soviet territory. And at SALT we have focused on weapons of intercontinental range.

Both these negotiations are already exceedingly complex. Progress would have been jeopardized by burdening their agendas further. In SALT, clearly the first order of business was to concentrate on the most direct and dynamic confrontation of the superpowers.

One of the major and contentious issues in our negotiations has been this very question of coverage. What systems are to be covered? This issue is of central importance, of course, because any program not restricted might expand at a rapid pace.

Throughout the SALT negotiations the Russians have tried to draw the dividing line between systems included and systems excluded so as to include as many of our systems and few of their own as possible. Prior to the Vladivostok accord, Soviet negotiators argued that our nuclear aircraft in Europe gave us an advantage in the strategic balance, an advantage that required compensation in SALT. But, totalling up the numbers on both sides at that time, it is our side which could have claimed compensation. To make progress on the major issues, we decided not to press such a case.

The Soviets, by contrast, have continued to contend that shorter range, small payload US aircraft and missiles that are based in Europe and Asia for the defense of our allies-- what they call "forward based systems"--should be factored into SALT because they also have some marginal capability to attack the Soviet Union. Yet, they did not wish to include similar Soviet aircraft and missiles which can attack US allies in Europe and Asia and attack US bases and forces deployed there. The Soviets also wished to exclude their older cruise missiles and medium bombers (intended principally for use against the US Navy) even though some of these have a marginal capability to deliver nuclear weapons on the United States. In similar fashion, they have contended that French and British nuclear submarines should count as part of US strategic forces,

but they wished to exclude their own, more numerous intermediate range ballistic missiles which can attack France and Great Britain. One of President Ford's major achievements at Vladivostok was to reach an accord which sets these arguments aside and permits us to concentrate on the most important strategic offensive systems.

The Soviet argument for counting these allied and US nuclear arms on NATO's side, without any allowance for all the Soviet missiles and bombers that can strike our NATO allies, of course, was transparently one-sided. But Soviet negotiators repeated it for so long and so vigorously that it threatened to acquire a specious substance. President Ford's position at Vladivostok restored perspective.

Now, the Soviet negotiators want to impose SALT limits on medium range cruise missiles--not just the intercontinental strategic cruise missiles--without, however, limiting their medium range ballistic missiles or any other regional nuclear forces on their side. Yet, cruise missiles, because of their slower speed, impose less of a first-strike threat and are, therefore, less destabilizing than ballistic missiles. And like aircraft, cruise missiles could also deliver conventional warheads, thus permitting a more convincing defensive posture, less dependent on the threat of nuclear escalation.

We have found similar Soviet negotiating approaches in other arms control forums. In the MBFR talks, for example, it is apparent that the Warsaw Pact perceives the present military situation in Central Europe as advantageous. The Eastern approach to reductions would implicitly codify in an international agreement the major source of instability in Central Europe.

What is the implication of these developments and where should we go from here? One thing should be clear: we cannot simply agree to limit the medium range nuclear forces on our side, at the very time that we are witnessing a massive, unwarranted and unexplained expansion of such forces on the Soviet side. The principle of SALT--and indeed of arms control--is "equal security," and the United States is convinced that the principle will be upheld only through realistically balanced restrictions on both sides.

A second point is just as clear: In the future, nuclear arms control cannot be limited to so-called "strategic" weapons.

- For one thing, the same nuclear delivery system can serve different purposes. As President Ford said, "there are certain new systems--we call them grey area systems--which are capable of either strategic or tactical use."
- For another, the distinction between "tactical" and "strategic" uses in itself is unclear, or at least highly subjective. Strategic weapons can be used against tactical targets; tactical weapons can in some cases serve "strategic" roles. For countries that are geographically close to their adversary, shorter range nuclear delivery systems constitute a "strategic" threat or conversely, a "strategic" deterrent. For example, the strategic deterrent forces of the United Kingdom and France are of less than intercontinental range, and these nations must regard Soviet medium range bombers and Soviet medium range missiles as a "strategic" threat.
- Finally, there are powerful reasons of arms control policy for preventing the further accumulation of any kinds of nuclear arms--whether we choose to call them "tactical," "regional," or "strategic."

We must do one of two things: either we compete with the Soviet Union in an expensive and wasteful buildup, or we reach viable agreements to limit such competition and to reduce these dreadfully destructive forces in a balanced fashion. The latter course--the genuine mutual arms control option--is obviously much to be preferred. We have to bend every effort to promote balanced arms limitations so as to avoid an open arms race on the one hand, and a towering Soviet preponderance on the other.

That is what we are trying to achieve in the talks between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries on mutual force reductions (MBFR), where we and our allies have proposed a reduction in NATO's nuclear arms in Central Europe, provided the Soviets are willing to reduce somewhat their massive superiority in tanks. (In the agreed area of reductions, there are now some 15,500 tanks on the Warsaw Pact side against only 6,000 on the NATO side.)

That is what we are trying to achieve by negotiating with great care on "grey area" systems in SALT, to lay a solid basis for dealing with these issues in future negotiations and to protect the interests of our allies.

Allied cohesion is extremely important to our current arms control efforts and it will become more important as the reach of arms control negotiations expands. "Allied cohesion," Secretary Kissinger reminded us, "insures that relaxation of tensions is broadly based."

Our alliance commitments also help restrain nuclear proliferation. Some of our most important allies chose to give up nuclear weapons and join the Non-Proliferation Treaty because they felt confident their security would be protected by the American commitment. If the expansion of Soviet regional nuclear forces should pose a growing and direct threat to them--no longer counterbalanced by US arms--this could undermine their confidence in collective security, and some day create incentives for acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.

Arms control is, like sufficiency in military power, an instrument of security--a vehicle for the promotion of peace in the world. The irreversible fact is, we live in the nuclear age, an age of rapidly advancing and proliferating technology. We live in an age in which it is simply impossible for this country to find security in isolation. Our security is inextricably intertwined with that of allies, particularly in Europe and Japan, where, through strength and forbearance, we have managed to maintain a peace that has shielded liberty, democracy, and progress for more than thirty years.

Indeed, in the nuclear era, our security and the security of our adversaries are intertwined as well. We must manage arms control negotiations and our military strength in such a way that the self-interest of potential adversaries impels them to forego armed aggression and cooperate with us to prevent nuclear war.

// Now the agenda for arms control has broadened. SALT has given us a base of experience and achievements from which we can, indeed must, launch new arms control undertakings, to meet new challenges.