

---

Volume 4

Number 2 *Volume 4, Number 2, 1983 (Symposium:  
Nuclear Arms and World Public Order)*

Article 10

---

1983

## United States Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control Policy in the Early 1980's

Robert T. Grey Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/  
journal\\_of\\_international\\_and\\_comparative\\_law](https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/journal_of_international_and_comparative_law)

 Part of the [Law Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Grey, Robert T. Jr. (1983) "United States Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control Policy in the Early 1980's," *NYLS Journal of International and Comparative Law*: Vol. 4 : No. 2 , Article 10.

Available at: [https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/journal\\_of\\_international\\_and\\_comparative\\_law/vol4/iss2/10](https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/journal_of_international_and_comparative_law/vol4/iss2/10)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@NYLS. It has been accepted for inclusion in NYLS Journal of International and Comparative Law by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@NYLS.

# UNITED STATES NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND ARMS CONTROL POLICY IN THE EARLY 1980's

ROBERT T. GREY, JR.\*

## INTRODUCTION

From the first explosion of an atomic device in 1945 until today, mankind has grappled with the problem of the role of nuclear weapons. When the United States alone possessed atomic power, some held the hope that it was not too late to close the lid of Pandora's box, locking the genie of atomic power inside forever. Others believed that man had consciously begun the nuclear age and now had to live with its consequences.<sup>1</sup> The United States would be foolish, and indeed would place itself in danger, if atomic weapons were not added to its arsenal. When the Soviet Union exploded its own atomic device in 1949, however, many of these arguments became moot. It was then obvious that the atomic weapon had become a principal piece on the cold war chessboard; the nuclear age with all its terror was here to stay. What remained to be decided by national leaders was how to fashion a national security policy around this weapon and, ultimately, how to prevent its use. Thus was born a legacy that would transcend partisan domestic politics and would be passed on from one presidential administration to the next—the formulation of United States nuclear weapons and arms control policy.

When Ronald Reagan was inaugurated President on January 20, 1981, he received this legacy. This essay will describe the evolution of the current United States strategic doctrine and the place of Reagan administration arms control policy within that framework.

## DETERRENCE

The most fundamental objective of United States strategic policy since 1945 has been to prevent direct attack, particularly nuclear attack, on the United States, our friends and our allies. For an adversary to be deterred from actions harmful to United States national interests, it must realize clearly that the United States possesses sufficient

---

\* Special Assistant for International Affairs to the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. At the time of the Nuclear Arms and World Public Order symposium, Minister Grey served as Acting Deputy Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Washington, D.C.

1. J. SCHELL, *THE FATE OF THE EARTH* 12-13 (1982).

military force, and has the will and ability to use that force, either to make the adversary's objectives unattainable or prohibitively costly, or both. The threat of such a retaliatory blow by the United States must be credible in all possible crisis situations. If the United States has such a deterrent, and an adversary believes that such force could damage it to an unacceptable extent should it attempt aggression, then its actions would, theoretically, be forestalled. The United States has used its nuclear strategy for most of the post-war era as a deterrent against large-scale Soviet nuclear strikes.<sup>2</sup> The implicit threat that aggression on a smaller scale could escalate into a full-scale nuclear exchange has also served this purpose. On the whole, however, it has been recognized over the last thirty years that nuclear capabilities alone could prevent only a narrow range of aggressive actions.

For a policy of deterrence to succeed, our adversaries must believe in the viability of our nuclear force. Each post-World War II administration has faced this challenge as rapid advances in weapons technology threatened to undermine the longevity of its strategic forces and, thus, of their deterrent value. Keeping the military force component of our nuclear deterrent modern and effective in order to ensure credibility has been costly and never-ending,<sup>3</sup> particularly in light of the Soviet Union's explosion of its atomic device in 1949<sup>4</sup> and its dramatic advances in ballistic missile technology in the late 1950's.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the major problem facing strategic planners has been to ensure a survivable and enduring retaliatory second-strike capability that has the ability to inflict unacceptable damage on an aggressor. Many solutions to this problem have been reached over the past thirty-seven years. The most durable solutions have involved increasing bomber numbers and readiness, hardening ICBM silos, enhancing command, control and communications, targeting Soviet military facilities and, most importantly, basing our nuclear deterrent on a triad of ICBMs, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. Nevertheless, the continuing threat to the survivability and credibility of our diverse deterrent force requires new programs to upgrade and modernize our strategic forces.

In addition to modernizing our strategic nuclear forces, we must convince our adversaries that we have a credible plan for the use of our

---

2. See S. ZUCKERMAN, *NUCLEAR ILLUSION AND REALITY* 42-44 (1982).

3. See *Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1983: Hearings Before the Senate Comm. on Armed Services, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 7-11* (1982) (statement of Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense).

4. See THE HARVARD NUCLEAR STUDY GROUP, *LIVING WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS* 79 (1983) [hereinafter cited as HARVARD STUDY GROUP].

5. See *id.* at 82-83.

retaliatory forces and the will to implement this plan. As momentum has shifted from United States monopoly and overwhelming superiority during the 1940's and 1950's, to a balance between the United States and the Soviet Union during the 1970's and, finally, to the present Soviet superiority, strategic doctrine has been adapted to meet these new realities.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC NUCLEAR DOCTRINE

Prior to the Kennedy administration, the United States nuclear deterrent policy was based on an overwhelming United States nuclear superiority.<sup>6</sup> Although the Soviet Union had exploded a thermonuclear weapon and was beginning to develop more sophisticated and successful means of delivering that weapon to peripheral and United States targets, the threat to the survivability of the United States deterrent force was minimal. The Eisenhower administration placed great emphasis on nuclear weapons in order to avert a full range of possible threats, both nuclear and non-nuclear. The Eisenhower administration was concerned with reducing defense spending and used United States nuclear superiority as a substitute for large conventional forces in preventing aggression.<sup>7</sup> Secretary of State John Foster Dulles made explicit the Administration's emphasis on nuclear deterrence as an all-purpose preventative measure when he warned of the United States determination to respond with appropriate means and at appropriate places should Soviet actions warrant a response.<sup>8</sup>

The viability of the United States strategic forces, the concept upon which this doctrine was based, remained unthreatened until the Soviets increased their long-range bomber force and began to make surprising strides in ballistic missile development. During 1957 the Soviets launched the first ICBM and, a few months later, Sputnik. The United States was therefore forced to adjust its nuclear doctrine as a result of the Soviet erosion of the United States absolute nuclear superiority.<sup>9</sup>

In 1961 President Kennedy inherited a strategic doctrine that did not reflect the new strategic situation. The United States threat of responding with nuclear weapons to any Soviet aggression was no longer believable in light of the ability of the Soviets to inflict unacceptable damage upon the United States. Furthermore, the threat of using nu-

---

6. See *id.* at 78-80.

7. See *id.* at 80.

8. See S. ZUCKERMAN, *supra* note 2, at 43; HARVARD STUDY GROUP, *supra* note 4, at 80.

9. See generally H. KISSINGER, NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND FOREIGN POLICY 10-20 (1957).

clear weapons was not a fully credible response to smaller, non-nuclear conflicts. The view that any war with the Soviet Union would degenerate into a general war was seen as a major policy flaw. By following this policy, a President might be given no option other than suicide or surrender in responding to Soviet aggression. To avoid having to make this choice, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara proposed a more flexible strategic doctrine that would provide the President with a fuller range of strategic nuclear options. He sought to develop a range of response options which would limit damage by attacking only Soviet military targets. McNamara also sought to strengthen conventional forces so that the President would have non-nuclear options available.<sup>10</sup> The principal United States strategic doctrine, however, remained deterrence by the threat of a full-scale nuclear response.

After 1962, the emphasis placed on developing a more flexible strategic policy was lessened, and this policy was replaced by the doctrine of "Mutual Assured Destruction."<sup>11</sup> As a policy, Mutual Assured Destruction involved the use of massive retaliation against urban-industrial targets as a deterrent. McNamara tried to establish a damage criterion for Mutual Assured Destruction so that the United States could statistically determine the level of strategic nuclear firepower necessary to discourage Soviet aggression. He concluded that if twenty to twenty-five percent of the Soviet population and fifty percent of its industrial capacity could be destroyed by United States retaliatory strikes, then that level of nuclear force was a sufficient deterrent.<sup>12</sup> As the then existing level of forces met this criterion, the United States halted additional construction on its strategic systems. At the same time that Congress and the armed services were pressing for additional forces, the Soviet Union embarked on the massive program of strategic and conventional arms development which has continued until today.

McNamara often spoke publicly of the need for nuclear flexibility in order to respond to contingencies across the nuclear spectrum.<sup>13</sup> Although rejecting massive retaliation in favor of a flexible response, his approach depended ultimately upon the threat of inflicting large-scale civil destruction on the Soviets in order to deter. McNamara tried for seven years to implement his policy of flexible response, but the only additional targeting choices he was able to implement were several large-scale, pre-planned options that singled out military targets for

---

10. See HARVARD STUDY GROUP, *supra* note 4, at 85.

11. See *id.* at 88-89.

12. See T. ETZOLD, *DEFENSE OR DELUSION?* 154 (stating that these figures were subsequently revised to 25% and 70% respectively).

13. See HARVARD STUDY GROUP, *supra* note 4, at 83-85.

destruction.<sup>14</sup> Mutual Assured Destruction would remain for many years the only major nuclear option for a United States President in a confrontation with Soviet nuclear aggression.

### THE 1970's

In the decade after 1970, both the United States and the Soviet Union recognized that they were approaching a state of parity in strategic nuclear weapons. Upon reaching parity, the Soviets continued to build additional systems until they were stopped by the numerical limits in the SALT I accords.<sup>15</sup> They then turned to making qualitative improvements. The United States response to the Soviet buildup program, especially their anti-ballistic missile (ABM) program, had been to match qualitatively Soviet numerical advantages by increasing the firepower of United States missile forces through the development of multiple, independently targetable, reentry vehicles (MIRVs).<sup>16</sup> A major advantage enjoyed by the Soviets, however, was the larger size of the ICBMs. The Soviet heavy missiles could deliver a larger payload than those of the United States which, coupled with the subsequent Soviet development of MIRVs and the improved accuracy of its MIRVed warheads, could pose a formidable threat to the technological survival of the United States ICBM force in the 1980's.

In the early 1970's, the United States lead in technology, both in guidance systems and MIRVs, seemed to offset the Soviet lead in numbers and throw-weight.<sup>17</sup> This was seen as providing a breathing space for the United States in which to speed up development of a new generation of strategic systems. It was hoped that this would maintain deterrence in the latter part of the 1980's when the Soviets would be able to exploit their heavy missile advantage in order to swing the strategic balance in their favor. Thus, work intensified on the B-1 bomber, the

---

14. See *id.* at 84.

15. Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, May 26, 1972, United States-U.S.S.R., 23 U.S.T. 3435, T.I.A.S. No. 7503 [hereinafter cited as ABM Treaty]; Interim Agreement on Certain Measures with Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, May 26, 1972, United States-U.S.S.R., 23 U.S.T. 3462, T.I.A.S. No. 7504 [hereinafter cited as Interim Agreement].

The Interim Agreement included a Protocol which set a maximum on land-based intercontinental and submarine ballistic missile launchers (ICBMs and SLBMs, respectively). *Id.*

The ABM Treaty was modified by a Protocol. See Protocol to the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, July 3, 1974, United States-U.S.S.R., 27 U.S.T. 1645, T.I.A.S. No. 8376.

16. See HARVARD STUDY GROUP, *supra* note 4, at 90.

17. *Id.* at 90-91.

Trident missile and the submarine program during the Nixon administration.

Arms control also began to play a major role in United States national security policy in the 1970's. In May 1972, the Interim Agreement (IA)<sup>18</sup> and the ABM Treaty<sup>19</sup> were signed, placing limits and restraints on the nuclear arsenal of each signatory. The signing of the SALT I agreements was possible because both sides thought they were at parity and that it was in their national interest to limit further growth of nuclear weapons. The ABM Treaty helped to avert a possible offensive arms race,<sup>20</sup> while the IA froze the number of strategic ballistic missile launchers on each side.<sup>21</sup> The IA successfully capped the rapid growth in the number of Soviet launchers and laid the groundwork for future proposals dealing with a reduction in those launchers.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the IA also codified the Soviet advantage in heavy missiles, and it was impossible in later negotiations to make reductions in these most destabilizing of systems. This was one of the major flaws in the SALT II Treaty<sup>23</sup> signed in 1979. It continued to allow the asymmetry in heavy missiles to exist. In addition, the SALT II Treaty included provisions that would have permitted large increases in the number of nuclear weapons.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the arms control efforts of the 1970's failed to produce lower force levels or reduce the threat to our ICBMs posed by Soviet heavy

---

18. Interim Agreement, *supra* note 15.

19. ABM Treaty, *supra* note 15.

20. See HARVARD STUDY GROUP, *supra* note 4, at 92-94. The ABM Treaty limited the United States and the Soviet Union each to one ABM deployment area, 100 ABM launchers and 100 ABM interceptor missiles at launch sites. *Id.* In addition, it allowed for six ABM radar complexes at each nation's capital or 20 ABM radars at an ICBM field. *Id.*

21. The Interim Agreement set a ceiling on ICBMs and SLBMs at their 1972 levels. Interim Agreement, *supra* note 15, art. 1. At that time, the United States had 656 SLBM launchers and the U.S.S.R. had 740. Additional SLBM launchers were permitted as replacements for older ICBM launchers. The United States was permitted a maximum of 710 SLBM launchers on 44 submarines and the U.S.S.R., a maximum of 950 SLBM launchers on 62 submarines. *Id.*

22. See HARVARD STUDY GROUP, *supra* note 4, at 92-93.

23. SALT II, signed June 18, 1979 (not entered into force), reprinted in S. EXEC. DOC. NO. Y, 96th Cong., 1st Sess. 37-45; see also BUREAU OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, SELECTED DOCUMENTS NO. 12B, SALT II Agreement (June 18, 1979).

24. SALT II allowed, *inter alia*, for further weapons production subject to certain numerical ceilings. These included: 2,250 ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers, heavy bombers and long-range ASBMs (i.e. air-to-surface ballistic missiles with ranges greater than 600 kilometers); 1,320 launchers for MIRVed ICBMs, launchers for MIRVed SLBMs, MIRVed ASBMs, and heavy bombers equipped with long-range cruise missiles; 1,200 launchers for MIRVed ICBMs, launchers for MIRVed SLBMs, and MIRVed ASBMs; and 820 launchers for MIRVed ICBMs. *Id.*

missiles. All through the 1970's, as United States strategic modernization programs were cancelled or delayed, the Soviets continued to modernize and increase their warhead numbers, despite the continuing process of arms control negotiations.

Richard Nixon, like John F. Kennedy, took issue with the lack of available nuclear options, especially in light of the approaching parity with the Soviet Union. He, too, was disturbed at the idea that in the event of a nuclear attack, a President would be left with the single option of ordering mass destruction of enemy civilians, with a similar attack on the United States sure to follow.<sup>25</sup>

Nixon's Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, echoing Secretary McNamara before him, answered the President's concerns by suggesting the need for a series of measured responses to aggression; implying the idea of limited nuclear war.<sup>26</sup> Unlike McNamara, however, Schlesinger was able to go further in implementing proposals for a controlled, flexible response. Under the name "strategic sufficiency," a strategic doctrine was formulated to provide a wider range of response options by identifying various targets and grouping them into operational plans which could be more responsive to a range of possible challenges. Strategic planning targeted military as well as civilian targets, giving the President the theoretical capability to use forces for objectives other than the mass extermination of population.<sup>27</sup> Schlesinger believed that with a reserve capability for threatening urban-industrial targets, with increasingly flexible offensive systems and with improvements in sensors, surveillance and command-control, response options causing far less civilian damage could be implemented.<sup>28</sup> The philosophy of flexible response was slowly being implemented with the doctrine of strategic sufficiency.

By the time the Carter administration took office in 1977, the strategic balance was regarded as being in a state of "essential equivalence."<sup>29</sup> This was interpreted by the Carter administration as meaning

---

25. See R. NIXON, *THE REAL WAR* 176-78 (1980).

[MAD] leaves the United States with no reasonable options if deterrence should fail, and it supports no rational political or military objectives in the event of war. A rational deterrent cannot be based on irrational responses. What future American President, for example, would risk New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Washington to save Berlin?

*Id.* at 176.

26. See generally R.J. LIFTON & R. FALK, *INDEFENSIBLE WEAPONS* 183 (1982).

27. See generally Schlesinger, *Flexible Strategic Options and Deterrence*, *SURVIVAL*, Mar.-Apr. 1974, at 86-90.

28. *Id.*

29. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, evaluating the strategic nuclear balance, commented that

that advantages in force characteristics enjoyed by the Soviets were offset by other United States advantages, and vice-versa. The Soviet advances in weapons technology foreseen in the early 1970's had now come into being, however, and the United States strategic programs designed to counterbalance this improved capability were bogged down in domestic politics. The balance of forces had indeed become perilous.

In the summer of 1977, President Carter ordered a fundamental review of United States targeting doctrine in order to examine its deterrent capability in the light of the shift in strategic balance. After eighteen months, the review was completed, and its basic principles, under the name "countervailing strategy," were implemented in Presidential Directive 59 (PD-59).<sup>30</sup> PD-59 represented no fundamental deviation from past doctrine, but instead represented a refinement and codification of previous strategic policy statements. It tied together and stated clearly the evolution of the strategic thinking of the past two decades. PD-59 was designed to move nuclear strategy away from Mutual Assured Destruction to a strategy that offered more flexible options.

Although Secretary of Defense Harold Brown believed that Mutual Assured Destruction formed the foundation of nuclear deterrence, he recognized its inherent limitations.<sup>31</sup> He stated that "deterrence must restrain a far wider range of threats than just massive attacks on U.S. cities."<sup>32</sup> After reviewing the strategic doctrine inherited by the

---

a rough strategic nuclear equilibrium exists between the two superpowers at the present time. Neither country enjoys a military advantage; neither is in a position to exploit its nuclear capabilities for political ends. The situation is one of standoff or stalemate. Mutual strategic deterrence and essential equivalence are in effect.

S.S. KAPLAN, *DIPLOMACY OF POWER* 3 (1981) (quoting *Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1979*, at 4 (1979)).

30. See generally HARVARD STUDY GROUP, *supra* note 4, at 95, discussing that P.D. 59 "represented a refinement and elaboration of Schlesinger's limited nuclear options idea, giving greater stress to flexibility in targeting, the ability to change targets during the course of a prolonged nuclear war, and the central importance of secure facilities for command, control, communications, and intelligence." This new strategy "anticipated prolonged nuclear battles and required more accurate missiles and beefed-up civil defense." Porro, *The Policy War: Brodie vs. Kahn*, BULL. OF ATOMIC SCI., June 1982, at 19. See also Beres, *Presidential Directive 59: A Critical Assessment*, 11 PARAMETERS, J. U.S. ARMY WAR C. 19 (1981); Grey, *Presidential Directive 59: Flawed But Useful*, 11 PARAMETERS, J. U.S. ARMY WAR C. 29 (1981). Secretary of Defense Harold Brown outlined the Carter administration's strategy in a speech he delivered to the Naval War College. Remarks of H. Brown at the Convocation Ceremonies for the 97th Naval War College Class (Dept. of the Navy, Aug. 20, 1980), *excerpts reprinted in* N.Y. Times, Aug. 21, 1980, at A9, col. 1 [hereinafter cited as Remarks of Secretary Brown].

31. Remarks of Secretary Brown, *supra* note 30.

32. *Id.* at 6.

Carter administration, Secretary Brown concluded that there was a need to develop plans for attacks on Soviet military, industrial and political control targets, while holding back significant destruction capacity in reserve.<sup>33</sup> The swift advance in Soviet weapons technology effectively ended the notion that we could maintain an adequate deterrence solely by the threat of massive retaliation against Soviet cities. After nineteen years and four administrations, a strategic nuclear doctrine that embodied the flexible response essential to maintain the credibility of the nuclear deterrent was codified by a presidential directive.<sup>34</sup>

#### CURRENT NUCLEAR AND ARMS CONTROL POLICY

When the Reagan administration came into office in January, 1981, it inherited a strategic situation in which the balance was shifting from rough parity to Soviet supremacy. The reasons for United States anxiety over this trend were simple. The Soviet Union had embarked on an ambitious arms modernization program in the early 1960's. By 1968, the Soviets were approaching parity. Although at that time the United States remained superior in numbers of warheads and in the quality of our strategic systems, it was recognized that by the late 1970's, unless the United States modernized all three components of its triad, the balance of forces would tilt dangerously in the Soviet favor.<sup>35</sup>

During the early 1970's, the United States began modernizing its strategic triad. The MX, the Trident I missile, the Trident submarine and missile system, the B-1 bomber and cruise missiles were intended to meet the growing Soviet threat of the late 1970's and the 1980's.

---

33. *Id.* at 7.

34. Concluding his remarks to the Naval War College, Secretary Brown pointed out that Presidential Directive 59 was not a new departure, adding,

Previous Administrations, going back well into the 1960's, recognized the inadequacy of a strategic doctrine [sic] that would give us too narrow a range of options. The fundamental premises of our countervailing strategy are a natural evolution of the conceptual foundations built over the course of a generation, by, for example, Secretaries McNamara and Schlesinger, to name only two of my predecessors who have been most identified with development of our nuclear doctrine.

This Administration does not claim to have discovered the need for broad scale deterrence, or for improved flexibility, or for secure and reliable command and control of our own forces should deterrence fail, or for effective targeting of military forces and their political leadership and military control.

This evolution in our doctrine enhances deterrence, and reduces the likelihood of nuclear war. . . .

*Id.*

35. See generally COMMITTEE ON THE PRESENT DANGER, IS AMERICA BECOMING NUMBER 2? CURRENT TRENDS IN THE U.S.-SOVIET MILITARY BALANCE (1978).

However, there were inadequate defense budgets to fully fund these programs, causing United States modernization efforts to fall behind schedule or be cancelled.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, Soviet defense spending increased at the rate of approximately four percent a year overall, and eight percent in the nuclear area.<sup>37</sup> The credibility of the United States deterrent was being undermined as our second-strike capability became more and more vulnerable to a Soviet first-strike.

Since the early 1970's, the Soviets have:

- developed and deployed three types of ICBMs (the SS-17, 18 and 19) with large, accurate warheads that made these ICBMs capable of destroying most of our ICBM force;<sup>38</sup>

- produced a highly survivable, dispersed and redundant command, control and communications (C3) network that is designed specifically to withstand nuclear attack;<sup>39</sup>

- deployed some 324 SS-20 mobile, intermediate-range, nuclear missile launchers with 972 warheads (plus refires) which threaten NATO Europe from launch sites deep within the Soviet Union;<sup>40</sup>

- expanded and improved their air defense network so that it can increasingly hinder penetration by United States bombers;<sup>41</sup>

- deployed three new classes of submarine-launched ballistic missiles and produced over thirty new SSBNs so that they now deploy seventy modern ships of this type;<sup>42</sup> and

- developed a prototype of a new Soviet long-range bomber air-

36. See N.Y. Times, Apr. 30, 1982, at A3, col. 4.

37. See COMMITTEE ON THE PRESENT DANGER, HAS AMERICA BECOME NUMBER 2? THE U.S.-SOVIET MILITARY BALANCE AND AMERICAN DEFENSE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS 7 (1982).

38. See Address by Alexander M. Haig, Jr., U.S. Secretary of State, to the Center for Strategic and International Studies of Georgetown University (April 6, 1982), reprinted in N.Y. Times, Apr. 7, 1982, at A8, col. 1. Secretary of State Haig declared,

In the last ten years the Soviets introduced an unprecedented array of new strategic and intermediate range systems into their arsenals, including the SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19 ICBMs, the Backfire bomber, the Typhoon submarine and several new types of submarine-launched missiles and the SS-20 intermediate range missile. In contrast during this same period, the U.S. exercised restraint, introducing only the Trident missile and submarine and the slower, air-breathing cruise missile.

*Id.* at 1. See also SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, NUCLEAR WEAPONS 214 (1980) (a list of Russian armaments deployed since 1970) [hereinafter cited as NUCLEAR WEAPONS].

39. COMMITTEE ON THE PRESENT DANGER, *supra* note 35, at 40.

40. NUCLEAR WEAPONS, *supra* note 38, at 216.

41. R. BERMAN & J. BAKER, SOVIET STRATEGIC FORCES: REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSES 145 (1982).

42. *Id.* at 109.

craft, which appeared at an airfield near Moscow in late 1981. It has a variable geometry swept wing, and is similar to and longer than the United States B-1 bomber. Preliminary assessment indicates the new bomber will be one of the heaviest bombers in the world. It will likely carry both nuclear and conventional armament, including cruise missiles.<sup>43</sup>

The Soviets now lead in most significant measures of overall strategic capability. The United States retains a lead in total warheads. That relatively small advantage is reversed in terms of ballistic missile warheads, and it rests essentially on an aging bomber force whose ability to survive an attack and penetrate Soviet air defenses is increasingly in question. Soviet nuclear offensive capability now greatly exceeds our most pessimistic forecasts of fifteen years ago.

According to the Reagan administration, the Carter defense program did not go far enough to meet the Soviet threat to our deterrent force. Although the Reagan administration agreed with the basic thrust of the strategic doctrine that had evolved over the past twenty years, it felt that the trends in the strategic situation called for more drastic action. The United States strategic triad had been neglected too long.

On October 2, 1981, President Reagan announced a far-reaching program to modernize United States strategic forces. His modernization program is the most comprehensive one in many years, involving all three components of the triad in addition to improving other elements of our strategic deterrent. President Reagan said:

This program will achieve three objectives: It will act as a deterrent against any Soviet actions directed against the American people or our allies. It will provide us with the capability to respond, at reasonable cost and within adequate time, to any further growth in Soviet forces. It will signal our resolve to maintain the strategic balance—and this is the keystone to any genuine arms reduction agreement with the Soviets.<sup>44</sup>

The President's modernization plan includes:

(1) deployment of the MX missile in a survivable basing mode as soon as possible. The MX will possess sufficient accuracy and power to counter the Soviet monopoly in large, accurate ICBMs and hold at risk the full range of Soviet assets. It will also bolster deterrence by eroding Soviet confidence in their ability to successfully conduct a first-strike against the United States.

---

43. This aircraft is the backfire bomber. See *supra* note 38.

44. *Transcript of Remarks by the President on Weapons Programs*, N.Y. Times, Oct. 3, 1981, at A12, col. 1.

(2) procurement of 100 B-1 bombers to replace the aging B-52 bombers which will soon no longer be able to penetrate Soviet airspace. The B-1 will be able to penetrate Soviet air defense far into the 1990's and provide an effective, survivable cruise missile carrier for the next century. Once the ATB is deployed in the 1990's, it should be able to penetrate Soviet airspace well into the next century.

(3) continued development of the Trident II (D-5) submarine-launched ballistic missile, continued procurement of Trident submarines and deployment of nuclear armed, sea-launched cruise missiles as a secure reserve force. Acquisition of the D-5 missile will provide improved capability to partially offset the Soviet advantage in prompt, hard target kill capability. It will be able to place at risk a wide range of Soviet hard targets, such as missile silos and command centers. The increased range of the D-5 will help insure survivability of our submarines, thus contributing to strategic stability.

(4) deployment of a more survivable and enduring command, control and communication (C3) system. President Reagan's decision to modernize the strategic forces gives highest priority to the correction of existing deficiencies in the strategic C3 system. The modernization program for the system supports balanced improvements in essential capabilities, including the upgrading of the survivability and endurance of the alert warning and attack assessment sensors, increased mobility and endurance of command decision-making functions and extensive improvements in communications. It further addresses the task of assuring means for recovery and reconstitution of the strategic forces following a major nuclear attack on the United States.<sup>45</sup>

With these programs, the Reagan administration will finally implement a strategy that has been evolving since the early 1960's. Our strategic deterrent will no longer ring hollow; instead, we will have both the forces and the plans to deter aggression credibly along a broad range of contingencies. A President will no longer be faced with either suicide or surrender as his only nuclear response to aggression.

Although this modernization program is not designed to achieve nuclear superiority for the United States, every effort is being made to ensure that the Soviets have no incentive to initiate a nuclear attack on the United States or our allies. For moral, political and military reasons, civilian populations are avoided to the extent possible. This requires that we have the capability to hold at risk those things that the Soviet leadership values most highly—military and political control, nuclear and conventional military assets and the industrial capability to sustain war. We are determined to have the flexibility in

---

45. *See id.*

forces and planning necessary under all conditions of war initiation to withstand a Soviet first-strike and retaliate in a way that permits the United States to achieve its objectives. It must be made clear to the Soviets, who have developed armaments and a military doctrine designed to support limited war options, that no conceivable conflict scenario, full-scale or limited, could result in the realization of their political objectives. This has been the objective of United States strategic planning since the early 1960's, and it is ours today. The Reagan administration is committed to attaining this objective.

### ARMS CONTROL

The Reagan administration's arms control program plays a very important role in both supporting the evolved strategy and enhancing deterrence. We have learned much from our arms control experience during the 1970's and have taken full advantage of this experience in formulating our arms control policy. If we are successful in reaching our arms control goals, our nuclear deterrent can only be enhanced, the risk of war reduced and the nuclear balance maintained at equal but much lower levels of nuclear force. This lower level of force would then deny the Soviet Union the capacity for nuclear blackmail based on their superiority in ground-based intermediate and intercontinental range ballistic missiles.

As it was in the SALT process in the 1970's, the goal of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) is to correct the asymmetry in Soviet heavy missiles that has threatened our ICBMs for a decade.<sup>46</sup> Unlike SALT, however, START is looking to make this correction through deep cuts in the nuclear arsenals of both sides rather than through limitations that just cap them at higher levels. These cuts should eliminate most of the threat posed by Soviet heavy missiles, as the Soviet throw-weight advantage should, consequently, be greatly reduced.

The United States has proposed that ballistic missile warheads, both land-and sea-based, be reduced to equal levels of about 5,000, at least one-third below current numbers.<sup>47</sup> This would reverse the destabilizing growth in ballistic missile warheads. We propose that no more than half these warheads be deployed on land based missiles.<sup>48</sup> This proposal alone should achieve substantial reductions in missile throw-weight. We also seek to cut the total number of all strategic ballistic missiles to an equal level of approximately 850, about one-half the cur-

---

46. See N.Y. Times, May 10, 1982, at A14, col. 1.

47. See *id.*

48. See *id.*

rent United States number.<sup>49</sup> In the second phase of the START negotiations, closely linked to the first, we will seek equal ceilings on other elements of United States and Soviet strategic forces, including equal limits on ballistic missile throw-weight at less than current United States levels.

In both phases of the START talks, we have insisted, and will continue to insist on verification measures capable of assuring compliance. In the case of provisions that cannot be monitored effectively by national, technical means of verification, we will propose cooperative measures, data exchanges and collateral constraints that can provide the necessary confidence in compliance. The Soviet Union has already told us, and Mr. Brezhnev said publicly, that it will accept reasonable verification procedures of this kind to supplement national, technical means of verification.<sup>50</sup> It is essential that the Soviets follow through with this commitment.

Another important arms negotiation based in Geneva is the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) talks. In these talks the United States is seeking to right an asymmetry in the nuclear balance by eliminating an entire class of long-range missiles from the arsenals of both sides.<sup>51</sup> The West does not currently deploy any missile in Europe with the range, accuracy or mobility of the most dangerous, intermediate-range Soviet missile, the SS-20. In 1979 NATO agreed to deploy 572 Pershing II and ground-based cruise missiles in Europe to counter the threat posed by the SS-20.<sup>52</sup> The United States has proposed to forego deployment of these Pershing II missiles and GLCMs in Europe in return for the destruction of 80 Soviet SS-4s and SS-5s and the 324 SS-20 missiles currently targeted on Europe.

The Soviet lead in ground-based, intermediate-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles is one of the most serious security problems we and our allies face. This advantage gives the Soviet Union the potential to pose a significant threat to our European and Asian allies as well as to friends in other parts of the world, at a time when a preemptive first-strike with its intercontinental ballistic missiles could, in the-

---

49. *See id.*

50. *See generally* HARVARD STUDY GROUP, *supra* note 4, at 197-200 (discussing verification of arms control agreements).

51. Both parties have set forth proposals in the INF talks, ranging from a Soviet opening offer to freeze deployments of SS-20s in Europe in return for a NATO commitment not to deploy Pershing II and GLCMs (ground-launched cruise missiles), to the American opening position of a "zero option" under which NATO would forgo its planned missile deployments if the Soviet Union would dismantle all of its SS-4s, SS-5s, and SS-20s.

HARVARD STUDY GROUP, *supra* note 4, at 168.

52. *See id.* at 166.

ory, destroy our entire ICBM force, the portion of our submarines that are in port at the time of the attack and those of our bombers that are at their bases. It is through our strategic modernization program and arms control talks that we hope to counter this threat.

There are a number of other important issues separating the two sides in both the INF and START talks. Much progress, however, has been achieved by the two sides in sorting out what is important to each and illuminating the way to possible solutions. A serious and business-like atmosphere has evolved in the talks, and, as these talks continue, we hope for further progress. If we yield in the end and settle for INF and START agreements which allow the Soviet Union to preserve its overwhelming advantage in ballistic missiles, we could find ourselves confronting former President Nixon's bleak prognosis about "Mutual Assured Destruction."<sup>53</sup> Such an outcome would legitimize the superiority in intermediate-range and intercontinental ground-based ballistic missiles that the Soviet Union has attained under SALT and authorize it to consolidate and better that advantage. On that basis the Soviet leaders would be justified in continuing to believe that they could translate their nuclear edge over the United States into political and diplomatic hegemony.

This would be a most dangerous illusion—the kind of illusion from which major wars have arisen in the past. President Reagan's approach to INF and START calls on the Soviet Union to join us in recognizing that the quest for hegemony can greatly threaten the peace and that real nuclear parity between the Soviet Union and the United States is the most feasible foundation for a joint program to establish nuclear stability based on the rule of law.

The Soviet race for nuclear supremacy during the last ten years has raised doubts about the continued effectiveness of the American nuclear deterrent—the rock upon which the renaissance of the West after the destruction of World War II was built and the foundation for its security. Uncertainties on this basic point could lead to fatal miscalculations. A most important goal of our foreign policy as a whole, and thus of our nuclear weapons and arms control policy, is to restore full confidence in those guarantees on the part of friend and adversary alike. It is the firm intention of this Administration to build on the foundations established by Administrations of the past to ensure that these guarantees never falter.

---

53. See *supra* note 25.

