

*Mesbahuddin Ahmed*

## THE INF TREATY : ROAD TO THE BREAKTHROUGH

The US President Reagan and the Soviet leader Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, the first super-power agreement to order large scale destruction of nuclear weapons in Washington on 8 December 1987. The agreement would eliminate within three years some 2,800 shorter and medium range missiles bearing about 3,800 nuclear warheads deployed in Europe and Asia. Both leaders stressed in opening remarks at White House ceremony that the treaty was just a start and their aim now was to reduce by half their countries' arsenals of long-range nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup> President Reagan said that the treaty underlined the need for "Glasonst" (greater openness) in military programmes and forces. He further said, "We can only hope that this history-making agreement will not be an end in itself but the beginning of a working relationship that will enable us to tackle the other urgent issues before us—strategic offensive nuclear weapons, the balance of conventional forces in Europe ....."<sup>2</sup> Gorbachev termed the treaty as an "historic milestone in man's eternal quest for a world without war."<sup>3</sup> In his speech after the signing the Soviet leader maintained, "What has been accomplished is only the beginning. It is only the start of nuclear disarmament."<sup>4</sup> The Kremlin leader rejected the notion that there was a winner or loser as a result of the treaty, even though the Soviet Union

---

1. *Bangladesh Observer*, December 9, 1987.

2. *Bangladesh Observer*, December 11, 1987.

3. *ibid.*

4. *Bangladesh Observer*, December 10, 1987.



will destroy nearly four times as many warheads as the United States. "Commonsense has won, reason has won,"<sup>5</sup> Gorbachev said. A few days after the signing of INF treaty NATO allies signed an agreement to implement aspects of the Washington superpower treaty. An auxiliary agreement was signed by the five members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation—Britain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and West Germany—which consented in 1979 to deploy INF missiles in their countries as a counterforce against Soviet SS-20 missiles. The agreement spells out procedures for Soviet inspectors to enter the five countries and verify compliance with treaty for 13 years.<sup>6</sup> The Soviet Politburo in its first meeting since Washington summit "fully approved" Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's steps. The US-USSR agreement on eliminating medium and short range nuclear missiles from Europe and Asia does not by itself amount to much unless it is followed up by measures to rid the world of all nuclear weapons.

The agreement has nevertheless been viewed as a major breakthrough in superpower arms negotiations. The following discussion will centre on the background of the Washington agreement to reduce the nuclear stockpiles of the superpowers starting from NATO's decision in 1979 to deploy Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Europe. The process of negotiation at both the Geneva and Reykjavik superpower summits will be highlighted. An examination on the prospects of another disarmament summit at Moscow this year will form the final part of the paper.

## I

Nuclear missiles with ranges between 300 to 3,000 miles are classified as short and medium range ones. Prominent among these are American Pershing-II and Cruise missiles and Soviet SS-20s. The main targets of these weapons are Europe and the Soviet Union.

---

5. *ibid.*

6. *Bangladesh Observer*, December 13, 1987.



Together they constitute only about 3 per cent of all the nuclear weapons at the disposal of the two superpowers whose nuclear armories are full of long-range missiles like Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) which can be launched from the ground, sea and air. These are sufficient to annihilate our planet many times over. The US did not have medium range missiles in Europe till 1983. Cruises and Pershing-IIs began to arrive in Western Europe from December 1983 in response to a NATO request, made in 1979, to offset the imbalance caused by the deployment of the Soviet SS-20s which were targeted at Western Europe.<sup>7</sup>

In retrospect, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt expressed concern over the growing eurostrategic nuclear imbalance in a much-noted speech in London in October 1977. He argued that nuclear parity, as institutionalized in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, had "neutralized" the nuclear capabilities of both sides and therefore magnified the significance of the disparities between East and West in tactical-nuclear and conventional weapons. Even before Schmidt's speech, two NATO panels, one dealing with military aspects, the other with arms control aspects, had begun deliberations on the issues raised by the eurostrategic imbalance. Initially, the Carter administration was not enthusiastic about the modernization of intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF), fearing complications for the SALT II negotiations. But by January 1979 there was already some preliminary agreement to modernize NATO's INF, which was soon linked with the idea to seek arms control measures at the same time.<sup>8</sup> In April 1979, NATO established a Special Group (later the Special Consultative Group, SCG) to study the arms control implications of the emerging modernization decision. The Group took as its starting point the need for NATO to deploy new systems and that arms control negotiations should be complementary to rather than a substitute

7. *Bangladesh Observer*, September 23, 1987.

8. Bethlen Steven and Volgyes Ivan (eds.), *Europe and the Superpowers : Political, Economic and Military Policies in the 1980s*, Westview Press, London, 1985, P. 43-44.



for modernization. The Group also agreed that the negotiations should be conducted within the framework of SALT III. To begin with, the principal negotiating objective would be to reduce the deployment of SS-20s, and to ensure the complete retirement of SS-4 and SS-5 missiles. The Western system negotiable at this stage would be the Pershing IIs and Ground-launched cruise missiles. These land-based missile systems were to be subject to global limitations as well as regional subceilings.<sup>9</sup>

In October 1979, the Soviet Union offered to negotiate on the condition that NATO would defer its decision to deploy new missiles. NATO rejected the offer and in December of that year decided to deploy in Europe, beginning in 1983, 572 American Pershing II missiles and Cruise missiles, capable of reaching the Soviet Union, and to seek at the same time arms control agreements with the Soviet Union. All of the 108 Pershing missiles but only 96 of the Cruise missiles were to be deployed on German territory, reflecting the determination of the German government—based largely on political grounds that Germany would not be the sole West European NATO member to host weapons that the Soviet Union considered a major strategic threat.<sup>10</sup> The Soviet Union later declared that NATO's decision to deploy Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Europe had destroyed any possibility for negotiations. That possibility received another setback when the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan. In response, President Carter asked the Senate to suspend consideration of the SALT II Treaty, bringing US-Soviet arms control negotiations to a full halt. The deadlock was broken by the Chancellor Schmidt's visit to Moscow on 30 June—1 July 1980, when President Brezhnev declared that the Soviet Union was ready to negotiate even before the US ratification of SALT II, but that any resulting agreement could take effect only after US ratification. Furthermore, the missile question had to be

9. Sverre Lodgaard, "Long-range Theatre Nuclear Forces in Europe", in *The Arms Race and Arms Control*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Taylor and Francis Ltd., London, 1982, p. 169-170.

10. Bethlen, Steven and Volgyes Iven (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 44



discussed "simultaneously and in organic connection with the question of American forward-based nuclear means."<sup>11</sup>

During November 1981, both the United States and the Soviet Union made proposals for the reduction of nuclear arms which were very much addressed to public opinion in Europe. By that time the anti-nuclear movement became a major factor affecting the course of negotiations, so both sides evidently felt the need to please public opinion and to show that nuclear disarmament is a high-priority item on their foreign policy agenda. In his speech at the National Press Club on 18 November 1981, President Reagan said that the United States was prepared to cancel its deployment of Pershing II and Ground-launched cruise missiles if the Soviets dismantled their SS-20, SS-4 and SS-5 missiles.<sup>12</sup> The 'Zero option' proposal implied that all Soviet missiles of these types must be dismantled regardless of their location, including those deployed in Eastern Siberia.

In rejecting President Reagan's 'zero option' proposals, the Soviet Union alleged that the motive behind his so-called peace proposal was to defuse protests in Western Europe and thus clear the path for deployment of a new generation of US missiles that would give Washington a first-strike capability against Moscow's strategic missile force. Speaking in Bonn on 24 November, President Brezhnev told the West Germans, and the world, how unfair and one-sided these missile reduction proposals were: the Soviet Union would have to dismantle its already deployed missiles to cancel the proposed deployment of Pershing IIs and Cruise missile by the US in Europe because of strong public and certain Government's opposition. Moreover, President Brezhnev said, President Reagan did not spell out whether, to balance the Soviet dismantling of intermediate-range missiles, the British and the French theatre nuclear missiles would be dismantled. The Soviets have been demanding for years discussion of the forward-based nuclear-weapon systems in Europe, If these are included in the

---

11. Sverre Lodgaard, *op. cit.*, p. 170

12. *ibid.*, p. 172



'zero option', the result would be a denuclearised Europe, but that was not Reagan's intention. The 'zero option' of President Reagan in effect was a one-sided 'zero option' and not a mutually balanced zero option—zero missiles for the Soviet Union while Western nuclear capabilities were maintained. In their assessment of medium-range nuclear arms with the West, the Soviets included British and French weapons and US forward-based systems. But the United States rejected this assessment as a basis for negotiations arguing that these should be dealt with under separate negotiations.<sup>13</sup>

The 1979 deployment decision of American Pershing II and Cruise missiles in West Europe had little to do with the much publicised threat of Soviet SS-20 deployment beginning in the mid-1970s. Although the Soviet SS-20s became a convenient pretext for the Western decision and a useful public justification, the real reasons for the decision to deploy Pershing II and Cruise missiles were different. First, many Europeans and Americans began to worry since the mid-1970s that at a time when there was strategic parity between the US and USSR, the NATO assumption that the US would risk the destruction of its own homeland in defence of Europe appeared incredible (Gen. De Gaulle had long back rhetorically asked whether the US would risk New York for the sake of Paris). The final consensus within the alliance was that the US should deploy a new generation of missiles in West Europe to reassert the nuclear coupling between the two sides of the Atlantic alliance and politically reassure its European allies that the US is committed to the defence of Europe and capable of defending Europe without having to resort to strategic arsenals based on US territory. By the mid-1970s the US nuclear strategy had begun its drift from the earlier doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) to one of fighting limited and controlled nuclear wars. This new emphasis on nuclear war fighting required the deployment of accurate and sophisticated nuclear weapons like Pershing II.<sup>14</sup>

13. O.N. Mehrotra, "Superpowers' Arms Control Ploys", *Strategic Analysis*, September, 1982, p. 372-373.

14. C. Raja Mohan, "Gorbachev and Disarmament : The Deliverance of Europe", *Strategic Analysis*, May 1987, p. 152-153.



The critical question then is why did the West propose 'zero option' if the Pershing II and Cruise missile deployment was a response to perceived political and strategic need rather than that of the SS-20 threat alone? The NATO leadership did not anticipate the enormous political reaction that deployment decision would cause in West Europe. With the rise of the peace movements and the sharp focus on the euromissiles at a time of increased fears over survival in the nuclear age, the NATO decision proved to be politically divisive. It appears appropriate indeed to think that to blunt the offensive of the peace movement and prevent any agreement with USSR that would cut into the deployment of the Pershing IIs and Cruise missiles, the Reagan administration came up with the proposal of the 'zero option'. According to Strobe Talbott, the 'zero option' was pushed by hawks like Richard Perle on two grounds. One, it was simple and catchy; and two, it was so directly against the Soviet interests that the Russians could never accept it.<sup>15</sup>

The Russians did oblige by dismissing the 'zero option'. And they had good reasons to do so. The SS-20 was only a replacement to the SS-4 and SS-5 which existed for long, and about which the Europeans never made much fuss. The 'zero option' called for removal of all existing Soviet missiles in return for non-deployment of new American missiles leaving the nuclear balance very much in favour of NATO. The 'zero option' also demanded not just European limits but also global ceilings on Soviet missiles. The Soviet were willing to reduce their medium-range missiles, but wanted compensation to offset the French and British nuclear forces which were obviously targeted on the USSR and which were to be modernised and numerically increased. The US said the deal was purely bilateral and the British and French governments declined to bring in their weapons into any euromissile deal between the US and USSR. Towards the end of 1983, as the American missiles arrived in Europe the Soviet Union broke the talks on euromissiles.<sup>16</sup>

---

15. *ibid.*, p. 153-154.

16. *ibid.*



In 1984, the outlook for arms control in Europe was bleak. The Reagan administration's arms control philosophy, premised on the judgement that a US defence build-up would produce Soviet compromises at the bargaining table, failed to yield results, or even measurable progress. Why didn't the policy succeed? Surely part of the answer is circumstantial. The constant leadership turmoil in the Soviet Union induced even more than the usual caution, to the point of intransigence on Soviet decision-making. European governments were skeptical of the basic philosophy underlying the Reagan administration's arms control policies. According to the European perception, shared by many in the United States, a policy of Western strength is a prerequisite for Western security. But that strength must be accompanied by a sincere willingness to compromise with the East in order to control the arms race and stabilize East West relations. Even in 1984, the administration was not able to reflect its more moderate rhetoric in more conciliatory arms control proposals.<sup>17</sup>

Though at the close of the year 1984 there was agreement between the US and USSR, in the light of the idea of the umbrella talks (to cover a flexible combination of arms limitations on various strategic offensive and defensive arms), the future of strategic arms limitation and reduction and arms control in general, remained clouded. The START talks on strategic arms reduction which began in mid-1982 drew relatively less attention especially in Europe where the INF were in the forefront. The main development, however, in the field of strategic arms was not arms control, but a new American programme for strategic defence—the SDI or better known as 'star wars' programme. The Soviet walkout from START as well as INF talks at the end of 1983 was not carried over to MBFR (the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions) negotiation which continued in leading neither to breakdown nor to agreement.<sup>18</sup>

---

17. Sloan, Stanley, R., *NATO's Future : Toward a new Transatlantic Bargain*, National Defence University Press, Washington, DC, 1985, P. 156-157.

18. Shah Salahuddin, "Geneva Summit 1985 : The Superpower's Search for Cooperation," *BISS Journal*, No. 3, 1986, p. 405.



## II

The arms control negotiations began again in March 1985. The moot point here has been the question of space-based missile defence system, on which the two superpowers have been maintaining diametrically opposite views. While the Soviet Union has been insisting on the United States abandoning the Strategic Defence Initiative President Reagan made it clear that he would never give up his proposed defence system. The seemingly frozen positions of Washington and Moscow left no room to believe that the US-Soviet arms control negotiations would produce anything more than tough talk.

It is widely believed that the Soviet Union cannot compete with the United States in the development of a space-based missile defence system, which entails great cost and high technology. But if the history of the development of new nuclear weapons by the two superpowers has any lesson it is that the Soviet Union would not take long to bridge the gap and produce its own space-based missile defence system, whatever may be the strain on the country's economy. However, in the recent past the Soviet Union has been engaged in a vigorous campaign against the 'Star Wars' system. It has maintained that it is not a defensive system and it would provide first-strike capability to the United States. It would lead to militarisation of space, and thus open up a new dimension of the arms race. Moreover, the proposed system is against the letter and spirit of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (A B M) Treaty. The Reagan administration, however, does not agree with Moscow on this. President Reagan is committed to the 'Star Wars' system and he has repeatedly said that it is not a bargaining chip in any arms control negotiations.<sup>19</sup>

The abundant differences on "Star Wars" between the two sides did not prevent Reagan and Gorbachev from announcing that they would "accelerate" the arms control talks which were in limbo, despite various proposals and counter proposals. The two leaders called for

---

19. O.N. Mehrotra, "The Soviet Nuclear Arms Control Initiative," *Strategic Analysis*, November 1985, p. 790-791.



“early progress” at the talks particularly in the areas where there was a “common ground.” The joint statement issued by the two leaders at the end of the Geneva summit in 1985 enumerated a variety of arms control and confidence-building measures which they together would pursue. These measures range from “nuclear risk reduction centres” to a ban on chemical weapons. Regarding the central issue of arms control—the American “Star Wars” programme—there was however no progress at Geneva. The final statement made no reference to the programme. In his press conference that followed the release of the joint statement, Gorbachev reiterated his plea against the American strategic Defence Initiative which aimed at building defensive weapons against a nuclear missile attack. The Soviets have been calling for a ban on development of space strike weapons.<sup>20</sup>

While the Soviet Union has maintained its substantive position on “Star Wars” it appears to have yielded a little on its negotiating stance. Until now the Soviets have argued that unless there was an agreement to restrict the SDI programme, nothing else in arms control would work. That is, progress in nuclear arms control is contingent upon an American willingness to limit “Star Wars” to research alone. The Soviet proposal for reducing the nuclear arsenals by half was linked to the US curbing its “Star Wars” programme. The Soviet position hitherto has been marked by its insistence that nuclear and space arms control were interrelated. The Reagan-Gorbachev joint statement indicated that the Soviets modified their earlier stance.

It referred to the Shultz-Gromyko communique of January 1985 at the summit which called for preventing an arms race in space and terminating it on earth. But Reagan and Gorbachev stopped short of reiterating the interrelationship between space and nuclear arms, so prominent in the Shultz-Gromyko formulation of January. The

20. C. Raja Mohan, “Arms Control : A Letdown at Geneva”, *Strategic Analysis*, January 1986, p. 988.



Soviets thus, no longer seemed to insist on the primacy of an agreement on "Star Wars." The areas in which Reagan-Gorbachev statement called for early progress included 50 per cent cut in nuclear arms and an interim agreement on euromissiles. The Soviets who seemed to have accepted the delinking of "Star Wars" from nuclear arms control in the joint statement, however, appeared to re-emphasize the link between the two in their post-summit statements. This could either be directed at the domestic audience to indicate that nothing has been yielded or at the US Congress to increase pressures on the Reagan administration to use SDI only as a bargaining chip at the Geneva talks.

On the strategic nuclear arsenals, the Soviets proposed a 50 per cent reduction and the Americans called for "deep cuts." While there apparently was a lot of similarity in the two proposals, deep differences over specifics precluded an agreement. The Soviets wanted to include in the cuts all those weapons which could reach each other's territory, irrespective of where they were based. The Americans were not willing to accept this definition of strategic weapons, because they had the advantage of deploying medium-range nuclear weapons in forward bases around the Eurasian landmass. Until now these weapons have evaded arms control attention. They would prefer to apply deep cuts only to nuclear weapons with inter-continental range.<sup>21</sup>

Another area, where the summit could have probable impact was in working out an interim accord, on euromissiles (American Pershing II and Cruise, and Soviet SS-20 missiles). So far the two sides had differed considerably on the issue. In working out a balance of euromissiles the Soviet Union wanted to bring in British French nuclear forces into the count. The US had refused to do so demanding a balance only between American and Soviet medium-range nuclear forces in Europe. The Soviets were particularly concerned about the American Pershing II, which they considered a weapon of

---

21. *ibid.*, p. 989-990.



first strike. They have been willing to accept the presence of Cruise missiles but not the Pershing II. A solution to the euromissile problem could be possible if the Soviets wanted to agree to the deployment of a few Pershing IIs and the Americans were ready to compensate the Soviets for the French and British nuclear weapons. Besides the key issues of nuclear arms reduction, the summit statement referred to agreement on various other issues of arms control and confidence-building measures. The call for achieving positive results at the Vienna talks on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) between NATO and the Warsaw Pact was hardly exhilarating. These talks droned on for 12 years, with no result, positive or otherwise.<sup>22</sup>

### III

The convening of another meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev took place after a lot of negotiations. The Reykjavik meeting was considered to be a pre-summit meeting. The two countries were keen that in Iceland both should come to some sort of an agreement for a general outline of an accord that would reduce intermediate missiles and warheads. It could then be followed by an agreement which could be signed at a summit meeting in the USA. The feeling that prevailed before the Reykjavik meeting was that Moscow would not insist on the link between a reduction on long-range strategic weapons and a ban on space defence. Gorbachev would probably propose some sort of a different linkage.<sup>23</sup>

The meeting that was supposed to achieve an important breakthrough in the arms control stalemate took place on October 11, 1986. The original purpose was to set a date for a full-scale meeting in the US to deal with medium-range missiles. Yet, at the end of the meeting it broke down over a single word : 'laboratory'. The most astonishing proposal was to slash to half the long-range nuclear

---

22. *ibid.*, p. 991

23. Aabha Dixit, "Reykjavik : The Great Fiasco", *Strategic Analysis*, February 1987, p. 1316.



missiles in the arsenals of the superpowers and eventually eliminate them altogether. After two days of intensive and serious negotiations, disagreement arose with regard to SDI.<sup>24</sup> Until the talk focused on SDI, the Reykjavik summit made progress to a certain extent. On INF, Gorbachev agreed that U.S. and Soviet medium-range nuclear missiles should be withdrawn from Europe. When Reagan seemed reluctant, the Soviet leader pointed out that the President had been the first to suggest a "zero option." As Gorbachev described it later, he asked Reagan: "How can you abandon your own child, your zero option?"<sup>25</sup> The Soviet leader also agreed to cut his Asian-based SS-20 missiles from 513 warheads to only 100 (matched by an equal number to be based in the United States). He consented to freeze shorter-range nuclear missiles in Europe and to negotiate reductions. He accepted an agreement in principle on verification. On strategic weapons, Gorbachev accepted a stunning 50 percent cut to 1,600 delivery vehicles and 6,000 warheads.<sup>26</sup>

The questions that arose in the aftermath of the Reykjavik meeting were: (a) Did the US and USSR really want to disarm and maintain military parity? and (b) Did they really want to cut most and all the nuclear dimensions from their continued rivalry? The emergence of the SDI, around which an entire new generation of exotic weaponry was to be fashioned and the counter-action by the Soviet Union led one to believe that arms control was a dying dream.

According to Reagan, "While both sides seek reduction in nuclear missiles, the Soviet Union insisted on signing an agreement that would deny me and future presidents for ten years the right to develop, test and deploy a defence against nuclear missiles for the free world."<sup>27</sup> NATO defence ministers in the post-Reykjavik period endorsed the US stance as was to be expected and urged Moscow not to block the removal of nuclear missiles from Europe over the issue of the US

24. *ibid.*, p. 1317.

25. *Newsweek*, October 27, 1986, p. 9.

26. *ibid.*

27. Aabha Dixit, *op. cit.*, p. 1320-1321.



space-based anti-missile programme. Fourteen out of the sixteen NATO nations supported the ABM system and SDI (France and Denmark opposed SDI, Norway had been expected to dissent but went along with the majority). The ministers also stipulated that the US must conform to the 1972 ABM Treaty. A communique said, "we strongly support the US exploration of space and defence systems, as is permitted by the ABM Treaty."<sup>28</sup>

The latest movement toward an INF agreement, which had been stalled since the superpower summit in Reykjavik in October, 1986 began building earlier last year. Gorbachev broke the deadlock by agreeing to the summit proposal that both sides remove all their intermediate-range missiles from Europe which each retained 100 outside that region. He then startled the US by proposing to eliminate not only the missiles with a range of 600 to 3,500 miles but shorter-range weapons that can hit targets at distances of 300 to 600 miles as well. Finally the Soviet leader announced in the middle of last year that he would accept Reagan's global "double zero" plan and totally eliminate both classes of missiles worldwide.<sup>29</sup>

Although double-zero plan has been hailed in Washington and Moscow as a great step forward toward a balanced and real disarmament, in reality it is not. It is not real disarmament because the 300 U.S. Pershing II and Cruise missiles that will be withdrawn represent only a small fraction of the 5,000 U.S. tactical nuclear weapons currently deployed in Western Europe. Meanwhile, the 1,300 SS-20, SS-22 Soviet missile warheads involved in the agreement amount to a tiny fraction of some 15,000 to 20,000 strategic and tactical Soviet nuclear arms that will still be capable of desarmament, they should have started by cutting down half of their strategic arsenals as they had promised in Reykjavik as well as most of their thousands of tactical nukes in Europe, rather than focusing on the one category of weapons that could involve them directly in a European war. Nor is it a balanced

28. *ibid.*, p. 1322.

29. *Time*, September 7, 1987, p. 23.



agreement : even though the US have claimed that this is a great deal for the West since the United States is trading four Soviet war-heads for each of its own, the truth is that NATO will be doing away with its only European-based missiles capable of reaching Soviet territory while the Soviets will retain thousands of other arms that could still reach European soil.

In strategic terms, therefore, the most important result of the deal will be to turn Europe into an unequal security zone : should a war break out in Europe, it would be fought on European soil with no European based weapons (other than the remaining squadrons of US F-111 fighter-bombers in Britain) capable of escalating to the territories of the two superpowers. In truth, therefore, what the United States and Soviet Union have done with their 'double-zero' deal is to forge a nuclear non-aggression pact for their own homelands on the back of their respective European allies. Another result of 'double-zero' will be to concentrate on West Germany the lone power possessing nuclear weapons with a range of less than 500 kilometres that are allowed under the agreement. So West Europe's most exposed and fragile nation will carry the bulk of the nuclear risk.<sup>30</sup>

Earlier last year, Gorbachev severed the negotiating link between Star War and INF, which made it possible to proceed with the agreement on medium-range missiles. But later he established new linkage between Star wars and the summit. Shevardnadze said he had proposed in Washington a 1987 summit at which INF would be signed and an agreement in principle would be reached on strategic Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.<sup>31</sup>

The West German Pershing IAs then became major sticking point. Though they are 23 years old and so out-moded that US troops in West Germany call them "tail fins", the missiles were among the shorter-range weapons that Moscow now wanted to eliminate. The pressure on Kohl thus steadily grew. West German public opinion

30. *Newsweek*, July 13, 1987, p. 25.

31. *Newsweek*, November 2, 1987, p. 37.



strongly favours an arms deal, and the Chancellor presumably would be sharply criticized at home if he resisted Soviet complaints and refused to budge on the issue. That would risk derailing the arms talks and angering both Washington on the eve of East German Leader Erich Honecker's historic visit to West Germany.

Even so, Kohl's willingness to scrap the missiles caught his Cabinet by surprise. Summoning reporters to a news conference in Bonn, Kohl proposed to dismantle the Pershings once the US and the Soviet Union fulfilled the terms of a global arms agreement. His qualification was important. By linking destruction of the Pershings to an East-West accord, Kohl guaranteed that Bonn would not find itself in the position of disarming alone. At the same time, Kohl openly admitted that he had conferred with Washington before making up his mind. Said the Chancellor : "I want the incumbent American President to be able to sign an accord this year."<sup>32</sup>

So, of course, did Reagan, who badly needed an agreement to salvage his final 17 months in office. Yet American demands for strict verification procedures, which included a system of "challenge" inspections of factories and missile sites on 24 hours' notice, ended up creating an awkward problem. Some hard-liners saw it as a way of forcing the Soviets to reject an agreement. Instead, an ironic reversal occurred. The proposal met resistance from the FBI, the CIA and some NATO allies. The reason : they feared the Soviets might agree.

Indeed, it suddenly seemed that the US might once again be put in the awkward position of having to take yes for an answer. Later, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze proposed strict inspection arrangements for chemical-warfare installations, as missile sites and factories. That prompted in limiting "challenge" inspections to a few facilities, while pushing for steps that range from detailed data exchanges to periodic inspections of missile sites.

Some arms-control advocates were disappointed that by revising its position, the US failed to seize the chance to set a precedent for

---

32. *Time*, September 7, 1987, p. 23.



strict verification that could serve for other treaties. Conservatives were particularly outraged. Declared James Hackett, an arms-control expert at the Heritage Foundation : "The Administration is proposing verification arrangement which do not guarantee that the Soviets won't cheat."<sup>33</sup> The Reagan Administration responded to these charges by insisting that the proposed new procedures are stringent enough and that the earlier demands for challenge inspections were no longer necessary now that Soviets agree to scrap all their medium range missile worldwide. Under the global "double zero", the White House says, there would no longer be any factories or operating launch sites to inspect.<sup>34</sup>

The combination of Gorbachev's internal political imperatives and the perceived external threats posed by an assertive US policy created conflicting and difficult-to-balance policy requirement. On the one hand, Gorbachev believed that he had to demonstrate resolve and gain credibility with both the United States and his potential domestic opponents. On the other hand, Gorbachev probably felt that an out-right confrontation with the United States would make it more difficult to pursue detente with Western Europe, and most importantly, would put in question the wisdom of his 'new thinking' approach in dealing with the West. Thus, Gorbachev had to demonstrate some tangible success in his arms control dealings with the United States. Such success would also enable him to claim that he has achieved results where his predecessors have failed, and to argue that his arms-control diplomacy has reduced the US threat to manageable proportions<sup>35</sup>.

Gorbachev's move on the euromissiles represented radical new thinking on the issues of arms, their limitation and on peace in the present day world. First, what he was suggesting was not yet another of those arms control arrangements which were in vogue

---

33. *ibid.*, p. 23.

34. *idid.*

35. David B. Rivkin, Jr., "The Soviet Approach to Nuclear Arms Control : Continuity and Change", *Survival*, November/December 1987, p. 493.



in the 1970s which sought to capture expansion rather than reduce weapons. It was a proposal which sought to eliminate some of the most modern weapons from the nuclear inventory. Secondly, the Gorbachev package stemmed from an understanding that the time was ripe to put an end to the arms race and turn resources from arms building to disarmament.<sup>36</sup> His domestic compulsions could easily be understood : a spectacular result in superpower negotiations would no doubt enable him to shift resources from the military to the civilian part of economy in conformity with his declared aims. Gorbachev could also hope, in his desire to lessen the military burden for the Soviet economy, that an arms-cut deal would create a favourable context for the public opposition to the Strategic Defence Initiative, specially in the United States. Domestic opposition could then attempt to scuttle the programme on the ground that progress in arms control/disarmament makes new strategic programmes less necessary.

At the Washington summit, both sides offered modest but useful concessions. Soviets made verification easier by agreeing to ban the encryption of telemetry from missile-test flights. The Americans accepted the principle of limits on submarine-launched cruise missiles. Washington doubts that any such ceiling can be verified, however ; therefore SLCM limits will be set outside the overall total of 6,000 strategic warheads for each side. As the talks dragged on, the teams found themselves deadlocked on a key question of "sublimits": how many of the 6,000 warheads may be carried by land-or sea-launched ballistic missiles? The United States had proposed a sublimit of 4,800 warheads, the Soviets wanted 5,100. SDI was an even more complicated cliff-hanger for the working groups, headed by Paul Nitze of the US and Soviet Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev. "The Soviets have told us a thousand times over that they won't give us a START agreement without words on SDI," said a senior US negotiator.<sup>37</sup>

---

36. C. Raja Mohan, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

37. *Newsweek*, December 21, 1987, p. 14-15.



START had fallen into place as the negotiators compromised on a sublimit of 4,900 ballistic warheads. The last unresolved issue on SDI—what would happen after the period of nonwithdrawal ended—was settled when the Soviets made a tactical retreat. They accepted a language acknowledging the real-life fact that “each side will be free to decide its own course of action.”<sup>38</sup>

The next Moscow summit was tentatively scheduled for the second quarter of 1988. Both Washington and Moscow thought that at least a general agreement on START could be ready in time for the next summit. “It’s a big job to wrestle one of these (treaties) to the ground. The detail is just endless. To have a long, tough road ahead of us, but I think it’s quite possible to finish START in time. It would be a huge accomplishment,”<sup>39</sup> said Shultz.

Shultz acknowledged, however, that START and SDI are forever linked. There can be no deal on one without at least an understanding on the other. The Soviets clearly look to Capitol Hill for help; already Congress has endorsed the “narrow,” restrictive interpretation of the ABM treaty as the price of continued SDI funding. Then, too Reagan will be out of office when the final decision is made on Star Wars. Congress, public opinion and a new President may combine to deal the programme the death of a thousand cuts, slashing its budget to a life-support level at which it would be possible to continue research but to deploy the system. The next SDI discussion does not necessarily have to be decisive; once START has been signed, the Soviets can hope to stave off Star Wars by threatening to reverse course and re-escalate the arms race.

#### IV

After the INF agreement, the nuclear defence of Europe rests almost entirely on nuclear weapons based in the continental United States or at sea. A 50 per cent reduction of strategic warheads would leave

38. *ibid.*, p. 15.

39. *ibid.*



that strategy without military targets and hence reduce its credibility. The dilemma will become, according to Henry Kissinger, unmanageable if the US administration persists in proclaiming a nuclear-free world as its final goal. The endless reiteration that the INF agreement is historic because it abolishes two entire categories of nuclear weapons is likely to backfire. Since these weapons represent only about 3 per cent of the superpower arsenals, the "benefit" rests largely in setting a precedent for the abolition of all nuclear weapons. Kissinger argues that such a policy is unachievable. So many nuclear weapons have been produced by the superpowers, and their territories are so vast, that the complete abolition of nuclear weapons would be utterly unverifiable. Each country would have to insist on retaining a number of weapons as a hedge against cheating and against the emergence of new nuclear powers.<sup>40</sup>

The euromissile agreement is but a small step towards complete disarmament which the world community so very eagerly wants. Gorbachev's priority seem to be on domestic economic reforms which necessarily require a period of peace and international amity. His initial problem has been to convince the world, the West in particular, that he values cooperation more than confrontation. He knows that peace with West with which it is in competition for influence worldwide will not come through talk alone. Deeds more than words will be required to make his points clear to those who matter.

The United States, on the other hand, is not the kind of superpower that President Reagan thinks it is. America is plagued by numerous ailments that make it look like a declining world power. The problems of the chronic budget deficit resulting from military over-spending, the widening trade deficit and the feeling that America is losing in competitiveness to countries it helped prosper, such as Japan, West Germany, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore—all these are taking their toll. In a situation like this, American craving for disarmament cannot be hidden for long. The world will watch with interest what other positive steps Moscow and Washington are able to take after the INF agreement towards freeing the humanity of the anxiety of nuclear annihilation.

---

40. *Newsweek*, December 21, 1987, p. 21.