

10-1-1990

## Open Skies: The 1955 Proposal and its Current Revival

Jane Boulden  
*Arms Control Centre*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.schulichlaw.dal.ca/dlj>



Part of the [International Law Commons](#), and the [Military, War, and Peace Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Jane Boulden, "Open Skies: The 1955 Proposal and its Current Revival" (1990) 13:2 Dal LJ 611.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Schulich Law Scholars. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dalhousie Law Journal by an authorized editor of Schulich Law Scholars. For more information, please contact [hannah.steeves@dal.ca](mailto:hannah.steeves@dal.ca).

## I. *Introduction*

On 21 July 1955, at a four-power summit conference involving France, Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union, President Eisenhower put forward a proposal calling upon the Soviet Union to engage in an exchange of military blueprints with the United States and to accept a system of mutual, unlimited aerial reconnaissance of each others' territory. Dubbed Open Skies, the proposal was intended to test the seriousness of the Soviet Union with respect to disarmament negotiations. It was also intended, if successful, to pull back the veil of secrecy surrounding the Soviet Union and its military activities.

This paper examines the historical background of the original Open Skies proposal and traces its development and eventual failure in the 1950s. The intention is to provide a thorough description and analysis of the rationale for the proposal, its evaluation, and the problems associated with it. Special attention will be paid to the Canadian response and role in the negotiations. The 1955 experience is contrasted with the 1989 Open Skies proposal and the 1990 negotiations, but the primary emphasis is on the 1950s experience.

## II. *The 1955 Proposal*

### (i) *Context*

The July 1955 summit meeting came about in a new atmosphere of goodwill between the United States and the Soviet Union. This was due to the completion of a much-delayed peace treaty between the Soviet Union and Australia in May 1955. On 10 May 1955 the United States, Great Britain, and France issued an invitation to the Soviet Union to meet in Geneva. Furthering the atmosphere of hope, on the same day as the summit invitation was issued, the Soviet Union put forward a disarmament proposal at the United Nations General Assembly which

---

\*Jane Boulden is a Kingston-based researcher on arms control and disarmament issues. She recently completed her LL.M. at the Faculty of Law, Queen's University where she wrote her thesis on Arms Control and Disarmament: Mechanisms for Ensuring Compliance. At present she works half-time for the Arms Control Centre in Ottawa where she is a research analyst and Associate Editor of the Barometer.

went a considerable distance towards meeting Western ideas about the need for inspection to ensure compliance with disarmament agreements.

Negotiations on disarmament between the United States and the Soviet Union had previously been focused on limiting the production and movement of fissionable materials. In the face of tremendously difficult technical problems associated with verifying such limitations however, the emphasis had shifted from controlling fissionable materials to reducing arms and armed forces giving news impetus to disarmament negotiations. The Geneva Summit and the Open Skies proposal thus came at a time when there was a new sense of hope about the possibility of working with the Soviet Union coupled with a desire to bring down the levels of arms and armed forces of the major powers.

(ii) *Origins of the Proposal*

Having issued the summit invitation to the Soviet Union, the United States needed to determine what should be discussed. In an effort to generate ideas about what might be proposed by the United States, Nelson Rockefeller, then special assistant to the President, organized a meeting of a group of experts at the Quantico marine base in Virginia.

The Quantico Panel's recommendations were based on the knowledge, presented and discussed at the meetings, that while the United States enjoyed an advantage over the Soviet Union in most areas of military capability, that advantage was in danger of eroding over the next five years. Given that reality, the Panel decided that a summit proposal must be designed to test Soviet seriousness about disarmament. If the Soviet Union proved not to be serious, the United States could embark on a major programme of spending and development to ensure that its lead remained intact.

The Panel concluded that the reunification of Germany and a serious disarmament agreement were the two most important objectives for the United States. It was recognized that without inspection, that is, without a way of finding out about Soviet military activities, there could not be a worthwhile arms control agreement. A good test of the seriousness of the Soviet Union was thus to see how willing it was to agree to intrusive inspection.

The idea of mutual aerial inspection was proposed by Max Millikan from MIT who had heard the idea discussed at an arms control session in Cambridge.<sup>1</sup> The panel liked the idea and decided to include it in their

---

1. W.W. Rostow, *Open Skies* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982) at 30.

recommendations. The Quantico Report thus recommended that the US suggest two agreements:

1. An agreement for mutual inspection of military installations, weapons, and armaments. Until experience has been developed on the feasibility of such inspection, this agreement would not make provision for arms limitation. Its purpose would be to provide knowledge and evidence on the basis of which a control plan could be devised.
2. A convention insuring the right of aircraft of any nationality to fly freely over the territory of any country for peaceful purposes. The possibility of abuse of this right could be prevented by the establishment of safety located control points for the international inspection and registration of aircraft for flights across international boundaries. The convention would be so drawn as not to interfere in any way with any nation's right to control for economic reasons commercial activities of foreign aircraft.<sup>2</sup>

The Quantico Report was submitted to Rockefeller on 10 June 1955. The Report was given a wide distribution, but support for the mutual aerial inspection proposal was not immediately forthcoming. In July, Rockefeller personally presented the proposal to President Eisenhower. The President was interested in the idea, but Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was hesitant. Dulles was uncertain about the proposal itself and was also worried that the US might make a proposal at the summit for the sake of the moment, which in the long run might prove not to be in the best interests of the US.<sup>3</sup>

The issue remained undecided right up until the summit meeting was underway. Rockefeller and some of his staff were located in Paris in order to be close to Geneva if the proposal should suddenly be placed on the agenda.

In the few days prior to the summit, Rockefeller used his time to gain the support of some key people including Admiral Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Robert Anderson, The Deputy Secretary of Defense. On 20 July, Rockefeller and the other advisors who had been stationed in Paris were called to Geneva. On the evening of 20 July the Paris crowd, along with the advisors already stationed in Geneva, met with President Eisenhower to discuss whether a proposal for aerial inspection should be made.

Dulles, the last of the President's key advisors to withhold approval, was converted to the idea by its potential for "drama and substance" with

---

2. *Ibid.*, at 30-31.

3. For discussions of the differences in the approach of Rockefeller and Dulles see: Rostow, *Open Skies*, at 34-56., also: M. Bundy, *Danger and Survival* (New York: Random House, 1988) at 296-297.

no accompanying risk to the US. With the support of other key advisors already in place, it was quite quickly agreed that such a proposal should be made.

(iii) *The Proposal*

Eisenhower had laid the groundwork for the Open Skies proposal in his opening speech on 18 July 1955. He stated:

Surprise attack has a capacity for destruction far beyond anything which man has yet known. . . . Perhaps, therefore, we should consider whether the problem of limitation of armament may not best be approached by seeking — as a first step — dependable ways to supervise and inspect military establishments, so that there can be no frightful surprises, whether by sudden attack or by secret violation of agreed restrictions. In this field nothing is more important than that we explore together the challenging and central problem of effective mutual inspection. Such a system is the foundation for real disarmament.<sup>4</sup>

The actual proposal was made three days later on the afternoon of 21 July 1955. Speaking partly from a prepared text and partly off the cuff, Eisenhower reiterated his belief that “No sound and reliable agreement can be made unless it is completely covered by an inspection and reporting system adequate to support every portion of the agreement.”<sup>5</sup> He went on to propose:

I should address myself for a moment principally to the Delegates from the Soviet Union, because our two great countries admittedly possess new and terrible weapons in quantities which do give rise in other parts of the world, or reciprocally, to the fears and dangers of surprise attack. I propose, therefore, that we take a practical step, that we begin an arrangement, very quickly, as between ourselves — immediately. These steps would include: [t]o give each other a complete blueprint of our military establishments, from beginning to end, from one end of our countries to the other; lay out the establishments and provide the blueprints to each other. Next, to provide within our countries facilities for aerial photography to the other country — we to provide you the facilities within our country, ample facilities for aerial reconnaissance, where you can make all the pictures you choose and take them to your own country to study, you to provide exactly the same facilities for us . . . . Likewise we will make more easily attainable a comprehensive and effective system of disarmament, because what I propose, I assure you, would be but a beginning.<sup>6</sup>

---

4. “Statement by President Eisenhower”, *The Geneva Conference of Heads of Government, July 18-23, 1955* (Washington DC: Department of State, Publication 6046) at 21.

5. *Ibid.*, at 57.

6. *Ibid.*, at 58.

(iv) *Soviet Reaction*

The immediate Soviet reaction to the proposal was subdued, but not entirely negative. In his memoirs, Eisenhower recalls:

For a time it appeared that the intransigent Soviet refusal to permit any useful inspection system in the USSR might be effectively shaken. The proposal, Bulganin declared, seemed to have real merit, and the Soviets would give it complete and sympathetic study at once. The tone of his talk seemed as encouraging as his words and my first reaction was that the assurance of isolation of inspection teams from the populations, eliminating any possible political indoctrination by such detachments, might prove to be a lead to progress between us.<sup>7</sup>

Eisenhower's optimism was short-lived however. Later that day, Khrushchev told Eisenhower that he did not agree with Bulganin's response: "From that moment until the final adjournment of the conference, I wasted no more time probing Mr. Bulganin; I devoted myself exclusively to an attempt to persuade Mr. Khrushchev on the merits of the Open Skies plan, but to no avail. He said the idea was nothing more than a bald espionage plot against the USSR, and to this line of argument he stubbornly adhered".<sup>8</sup>

(v) *Other Proposals*

While Open Skies became the centerpiece of the summit, the other three powers present also put forward proposals of their own. The Soviet Union reiterated its proposal of 10 May at the General Assembly for the establishment of ground observation posts as safeguards against surprise attack.<sup>9</sup> Great Britain proposed that a system of joint inspection of the forces in Europe be established in order to generate "increasing mutual confidence" in Europe. The system would also provide practical information that would be useful in setting up an inspection system for a future disarmament agreement.<sup>10</sup> France proposed that states agree to a set reduction in military expenditures, the savings to be contributed to a fund for international development and assistance.<sup>11</sup>

(vi) *Directive*

The final statement of the summit, approved by all four powers, outlined

---

7. D.D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1963) at 521.

8. *Ibid.*

9. "Proposal by the Soviet Delegation", *The Geneva Conference of Heads of Government, op.cit.* at 55-56.

10. "Memorandum by the United Kingdom Delegation", *Ibid.*, at 59, 64-66.

11. "Memorandum by the French Delegation", *Ibid.*, at 60-62.

their agreement to work towards the development of a system of disarmament through the Subcommittee of the United Nations Disarmament Commission,<sup>12</sup> and to take the deliberations of the Summit under consideration when undertaking the negotiations.<sup>13</sup>

(vii) *Disarmament Subcommittee Activity 1955*

On 5 August 1955, Bulganin told the Supreme Soviet that the conditions for international control through a proposal such as Open Skies do not exist, and stated that the Soviet Union had told the US that: “. . . aerophotography can not give the expected results, because both countries stretch over vast territories, in which, if desired, one can conceal anything.”<sup>14</sup>

(viii) *Proposed Implementation of Open Skies*

In spite of the apparent negative attitude of the Soviet Union, when the United Nations Disarmament Committee (UNDC) subcommittee began its deliberations on 29 August 1955, the US submitted an outline of how Open Skies might be implemented.

The implementation plan incorporated the Soviet Union's 10 May proposal for establishing ground control posts to monitor troop movements at key points to guard against dangerous concentrations of military forces. It consisted of three main elements: an exchange of blueprints of military establishments; unrestricted, monitored aerial reconnaissance; and ground observers stationed at key locations. Exchanges of blueprints would include: “. . . identification, strength, command structure and disposition of personnel, units and equipment of all major land, sea and air forces, including organized reserves and paramilitary forces; and a complete list of military plants, facilities, and installations with their locations.”<sup>15</sup>

Exchanges of information would be carried out progressively with schedules drawn up for “time phasing of exchanges to assure simultaneous delivery of similar types of information”<sup>16</sup> This information would be subject to immediate spot-checking. On-the-spot observers

---

12. The Subcommittee consisted of representatives from Canada, France, Great Britain, the US and the USSR.

13. “Directive of the Heads of Government of the Four Powers to the Foreign Ministers”, *Ibid.* at 67-68.

14. “Excerpts from Bulganin's Report on Geneva Conference”, *New York Times* (5 August 1955) at 4.

15. Annex 20, Document DC/71, in: United Nations, *Disarmament Commission Official Records*, 4th Year, 1955, Supplement for April to December 1955, at 38.

16. *Ibid.*

would be posted with land, sea and air forces as well as at key points to verify the blueprints exchanged. This ground observation system would be supplemented by an aerial reconnaissance system in which each party would have the right to undertake unlimited, but monitored aerial reconnaissance of the other's territory.

Each country would use its own aircraft and equipment for aerial reconnaissance. Every reconnaissance flight would include a representative of the host country. Each country would provide designated sites which would support the aerial reconnaissance mission. Procedures for designating entry and exit points, clearing observers, airplanes and crews and the control of air traffic would be determined through further negotiation.

(ix) *Response*

The primary Soviet objection to the Open Skies proposal was that it did not include any form of arms reduction or control. At the Geneva meeting of Foreign Ministers in October 1955, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov expressed some willingness to accept aerial photography as a form of verification, but only in the final stage of an agreement to reduce armaments and eliminate atomic weapons.<sup>17</sup>

A second Soviet objection was that the proposal did not involve other countries and foreign military installations of the US. In a letter to President Eisenhower, Chairman Bulganin stated that the Soviet Union had no objection in principle to the proposal for an exchange of information on armed forces and armaments, but thought that such information should be submitted by all states to an international control organisation. He went on to say: "It is impossible not to see that the proposal introduced by you completely omits from consideration armed forces and military installations which are outside the area of the United States and the Soviet Union. And yet it is perfectly self-evident that aerial photographing should also be extended to all armed forces and military installations located on the territories of those other states."<sup>18</sup>

(x) *UN General Assembly Open Skies Resolution*

In December 1955, Resolution 914(x) of the General Assembly urged members of the UNDC subcommittee to continue their efforts towards

---

17. B.G. Bechhoefer, *Postwar Negotiations from Arms Control* (Washington DC: Brookings, 1961) at 315.

18. "Letter from Chairman Bulganin to President Eisenhower, September 19, 1955", *Background of Heads of Government Conference, 1960* (Washington DC: Department of State, Publication no. 6972, April 1960) at 20.



developing a comprehensive disarmament agreement.<sup>19</sup> Special emphasis was to be placed on achieving agreement on the Open Skies proposal. The resolution was passed by a vote of 56 to 7 with no abstentions. The Soviet bloc voted against the resolution, reiterating their belief that disarmament was the first priority.

At the end of December 1955, perhaps in response to the UNGA resolution, Khrushchev delivered a speech in which he attacked the US and rejected the Open Skies plan.<sup>20</sup> However, at the same time, the US had begun a high-level campaign to win acceptance of the proposal. This campaign included an exhibition in New York city which demonstrated how the system would work.<sup>21</sup>

Little substantive progress was made in the UNDC subcommittee during 1955. To a certain extent this was due to the shift in emphasis from previous Western positions which had concentrated on controlling fissionable materials. The change in goals contributed to a lack of a coherent Western position and the Soviet Union was able to take advantage of this fact.

(xi) *Disarmament in 1956*

Negotiations on disarmament underwent a period of transition in 1956. Two new shifts in emphasis were evident. First, Eisenhower's Open Skies proposal and the May 1955 Soviet proposal on ground control posts had encouraged (and been symbolic of) a desire to develop methods to warn against surprise attack. Second, an overall shift to searching for "partial" measures of disarmament, or the "first step approach", which had begun in 1955, took hold in 1956.

Little substantive progress was made overall and although a few new proposals were made, much of the time was taken up by minor shifts in positions. For its part, the US was undergoing a major policy review which was not completed until late in the year.

(xii) *Demonstration Test Area*

The only new action on the Open Skies idea was a US proposal to establish a zone in which the technique of aerial inspection and ground observation could be demonstrated and refined. The proposal required a test area which was between 20,000 and 30,000 square miles in size and

---

19. UNGA Resolution 914 (X), 16 December 1955.

20. W. Hangen, "Khrushchev Attacks Eisenhower, Rejects his Air Inspection Plan; President Weighs Long-Term Aid", *New York Times* (30 December 1955) at 1, 4.

21. K. Teltch, "US Asks Priority for Aerial Checks in UN Arms Talks", *New York Times* (3 December 1955) at 1, 2.

did not include any sensitive military installations. For purposes of the experiment, a permanent naval installation, an air force unit, and an army combat unit should be stationed in the area and would be subject to reciprocal inspection.

In response, the representative from the Soviet Union, Andrei Gromyko, strenuously objected to the fact that Open Skies contained no disarmament measures. "If we study the US working paper more closely, we shall see that the focal point of that document is the question of control and that this question is presented in such a manner as in fact to divorce it from any concrete or practical measures of disarmament. . . . the point is that these measures are tied to a number of specific conditions which are impossible of fulfillment, which are not feasible."<sup>22</sup>

On 27 March 1956 the Soviet Union submitted a draft resolution to the Subcommittee which called for an agreement on reducing conventional armaments. This agreement would occur without any link to reductions in nuclear armament and was put forward as a partial measure. The draft resolution included provisions for the establishment of an international control organ which would establish ground control posts along the lines proposed in the Soviet Union's May 1955 proposal.<sup>23</sup>

### (xiii) *Canadian Response*

Canada was the first country to officially endorse the Open Skies proposal. Speaking before the Disarmament Commission in October 1955, Canadian representative Paul Martin praised the Eisenhower plan as a first step towards the larger goal of disarmament. Mr. Martin emphasized the need for increased confidence and that the Open Skies plan would go a long way to help promote confidence. In response to the Soviet objection that there is no guarantee of future reductions, Mr. Martin said: ". . . a partial answer is better than no answer at all".<sup>24</sup> And in sum, the Canadian Government saw the plan as: ". . . a reasonable nucleus around which an initial and limited agreement could be developed, and a most convenient approach to the solution of a problem which is so urgent and apparently otherwise intractable."<sup>25</sup>

Canada's first major policy statement on disarmament since the Open Skies proposal, was made on 5 July 1956. Mr. Martin supported the

---

22. UN Doc. DC/SC.1/PV.82, 23 April 1956, at 22-23.

23. Annex 5, Document DC/83, (1956) *Disarmament Commission Official Records* (New York: United Nations, 1957) at 9.

24. UNDC/PV.46, 21 October 1955, United Nations, (1955) *Disarmament Commission Official Records* (New York: United Nations, 1956) at 6.

25. *Ibid.*

trend towards partial measures and suggested that the first stage should include measures to give early warning of surprise attack and limits on nuclear weapons. Specifically, preliminary tests of inspection procedures, as proposed by the US, should be carried out.

The Open Skies proposal was supported as a way of building confidence and guarding against surprise attack:

. . . the Canadian Government attaches importance to the establishment of effective warning systems against surprise attacks, as an integral part of such a disarmament programme. It was for that reason that we welcomed the initiative taken in July 1955 by the President of the United States. . . and the proposals put forward by Mr. Bulganin, . . . We consider that the early application of the procedures envisaged through a reciprocal programme of aerial reconnaissance and observation from control posts on the ground should be an integral part of the early stages of such a programme of disarmament. These measures, as we see it, not only would help to lay a basis for the effective control of an agreed program of disarmament, but would greatly reduce — if not prevent — the possibility of surprise attack. Such a reciprocal warning system is needed if we are to move forward from a co-existence based on mutual fear to the prospect of co-operation based on mutual confidence.<sup>26</sup>

In the wake of the Open Skies proposal discussion within the Canadian Government began on whether there was a role for Canada to play in such a system. The US proposal on a possible demonstration test area, made in early 1956, prompted some thought about the possibility of using the Arctic area for such a test. The idea of developing an arrangement in the Arctic to guard against surprise attack (perhaps as a demilitarized area) had previously been discussed in a limited way. As the US was undertaking its policy review in 1956, Canada began quietly feeling out the US and the UK as to whether a proposal involving the Canadian Arctic might be useful.

(xiv) *Acceptance in Principle and Discussions on Zones*

For the most part, the time since Eisenhower's "Open Skies" proposal was spent groping for a way forward which could engender support from both sides. Throughout this period, President Eisenhower and Soviet Chairman Bulganin engaged in an exchange of correspondence. The letters covered a variety of subjects and were instrumental in establishing the future path of the disarmament negotiations.

In a 17 November 1956 letter to President Eisenhower dealing with the military situation in Egypt, Chairman Bulganin enclosed a

---

26. DC/PV.53, 5 July 1956, United Nations (1956), *Disarmament Commission Official Records*, *op.cit.* at 3.

“Declaration of the Soviet Government Concerning the Question of Disarmament and the Reduction of International Tension”. *Inter alia*, the document included a formal expression of willingness to consider a form of Open Skies within Europe. “. . . the Soviet Government for the purpose of facilitating the quickest achievement of agreement is prepared to consider the question of using aerial photography in the area in Europe where basic military forces of the North Atlantic Pact are located and in countries participating in the Warsaw Pact to a depth of 800 kilometers to the East and West from the line of demarcation of the above-mentioned military forces, if there is agreement of the appropriate states.”<sup>27</sup>

This change in the Soviet position opened the way for more directed negotiations. It was in some ways an unusual time for decisions to move forward. The US and the Soviet Union were experiencing increasingly tense relations due to the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the French and British military activity in Egypt. However, the two sides returned to the UN in January 1957 apparently anxious to move ahead on new fronts.

#### (xv) *The New US Position*

The new US policy on disarmament, unveiled in February 1957, was based on five objectives: the reduction of nuclear weapon stockpiles; prevention of surprise attack; lessening the burden of armaments; ensuring that research and development in space is for peaceful means only; and, to ease tensions and facilitate the settlement of political issues. In the proposals put forward to meet these objectives, the US suggested that “. . . progressive installation of inspection systems” would guard against the possibility of surprise attack. To this end, the US reiterated its willingness to carry out the Open Skies plan.<sup>28</sup> This represented a major shift in the US policy on Open Skies. The Eisenhower proposal was put forward as a prerequisite to the comprehensive disarmament agreement, with a view to instituting a system which would be used to carry out such an agreement. The US was now holding out Open Skies as a way of preventing surprise attack.

#### (xvi) *The Move to Two Zones*

In conjunction with the Soviet willingness to consider aerial inspection in the European zone, the change in US policy opened the way for

---

27. “Letter from Chairman Bulganin to President Eisenhower, November 17, 1956”, *Background of Heads of Government Conference 1960*, *op.cit.* at 94.

28. Statement by Ambassador Lodge before the First Committee, *Department of State Bulletin*, 11 February 1957, at 225-228. Also: DC/SC.1/PV.88, 19 March 1957.

discussions about progressively expanding regional inspection zones. Discussions now concentrated on determining where the zones should be located. On 9 April 1957, the US proposed a European zone bounded by 5 degrees longitude E., in the west, 30 degrees longitude E., in the east and 45 degrees latitude N., in the south. The triangular-shaped zone, ended at the North Pole. A second zone was also proposed which took in Alaska in Part of Soviet territory in the Far East.<sup>29</sup>

The Soviet Union responded on 30 April with a proposal for reductions in conventional forces and armaments in Europe. It incorporated previous Soviet proposals for ground observation posts and included an acceptance of the European zone proposed by the US with some revisions. The Soviet Union objected to the boundaries of the US zone because it included a large portion of the Warsaw Pact and a smaller portion of NATO. The proposed revisions moved the median line of the US zone closer to the dividing line in Germany and moved the zone itself slightly to the south with a northern boundary of 54 degrees N. latitude. The Soviet Union also proposed an expansion of the zone in the Far East, bringing in larger portions of US and Soviet territory. The result would give each side roughly equal areas of inspection — 7,129,000 square kilometres in USSR and 7,063,000 in the US.<sup>30</sup>

Much of the debate centered on the need to find zones that were roughly equivalent in size as well as in their contents. For example, a zone which included part of the territory of the US was not considered equivalent to an equal area of the Soviet Union if that area in the Soviet Union contained few military or industrial installations.

In Europe, the problem of defining zones was politically difficult. The US did not like the Soviet proposal because it would perpetuate the division of Germany, which the US was seeking to end. However, the Soviet Union felt that the US proposed zone was too one-sided in its inclusion of Warsaw Pact territory. A European zone also complicated the negotiations since those European countries included in the zone would have to be consulted and included in the final decision.

#### (xvii) *An Arctic Zone*

The exchange of European zone proposals brought agreement on an inspection system within reach. In an effort to continue the positive atmosphere surrounding these negotiations, US Secretary of State Dulles announced in May that the US would be willing to consider a non-European zone if agreement on Europe was not possible. Dulles stated:

29. *Disarmament Commission Official Records*, 1957.

30. Annex 7, DC/105, *Disarmament Commission Official Records*, 1957, at 28-29.

“We attach a top priority to getting a substantial inspection zone wherever we can get it quickly. Now, if we can get it quickly in relation to Europe, that is acceptable to use. If we can’t get it quickly as regards some other area which is substantial enough so that it involves a real test of good faith and enables the significance and the requirements of aerial and ground inspection to be tested out, then we take that other area.”<sup>31</sup>

In a mid-May press conference Dulles suggested that a zone in the Arctic regions might be the solution. Such a zone had little political significance and would allow the two sides to obtain some practical experience in inspection techniques. When questioned, Dulles stated that the Canadian Government has been consulted and that Canada had indicated that it was “sympathetically disposed to moving along those lines”.<sup>32</sup>

#### (xviii) *Consultation*

During June and July 1957, NATO members consulted with the US on proposals which might be offered to the Soviet Union. Just prior to leaving for the final NATO consultations, Secretary of State Dulles announced that the US would be willing to open up all of its North American territory under a reciprocal inspection regime. He also said that the US was consulting with Canada on the possibility of including Canada in such a package, although an Arctic zone would still be possible as a first step.<sup>33</sup>

#### (xix) *Formal Proposal*

On 2 August 1957 Dulles formally presented the new proposals to the UNDC Subcommittee on behalf of Canada, France, Great Britain, and the US. Two alternative inspection options were presented, both were to be associated with the entry into force of a first-stage disarmament agreement and would be geared towards safeguarding against possible surprise attacks.

In the first case, the entire territory of the continental United States, including Alaska, along with the territory of Canada and the Soviet Union would be open to inspection. If the Soviet Union refused this proposal, a more limited zone encompassing all US, Soviet Union,

---

31. “Statement of Secretary Dulles in Press Conference, 29 May 1957” *Department of State Bulletin*, 17 June 1957, at 965-966.

32. “Record of the Dulles News Conference on Arms and World Affairs” *New York Times* (15 May 1957) at 10.

33. “Radio and Television Report to the Nation by the Secretary of State”, Department of State, Press Release 430, 22 July 1957.

Canadian, Danish and Norwegian territory north of the Arctic Circle was possible.

Two zones were proposed in Europe. The first zone would encompass territory bounded by 40 degrees N. latitude, 10 degrees W. longitude and 60 degrees E. longitude. Alternatively, a more limited zone could be discussed, but must include territory in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

A decision on one zone was dependent on the other. The Soviet Union could not choose to accept the Arctic zone and not also accept a European zone. The US proposed that a technical working group be established immediately to discuss the technical details of such a system.<sup>34</sup>

(xx) *The Soviet Response*

The Soviet response came on 27 August 1957. In a strongly worded reply, the Soviet Union charged that it had tried to meet the European zone proposals halfway and that the Western powers had now proven their lack of good intentions by putting forward proposals for new zones. The Soviet Union charged the US with trying to find a way to prepare for attacking the Soviet Union under the guise of disarmament.

It is clear from the statements of the political and military leaders of the United States that the military chiefs of the United States and NATO would like to obtain for their use, by means of aerial surveys, the fullest possible information on the location of the Soviet Union's most important industrial and communications centers. It is obvious that the object of this United States proposal is the collection of reconnaissance data; that it would not result in an improvement but rather in a deterioration of the international situation; and that its real purpose is to contribute to the preparation of aggressive war, not to the removal of the threat of war.<sup>35</sup>

The Soviet Union also objected to the exclusion of foreign bases from the Western proposal and stated that the Arctic proposal could: “. . . scarcely be taken seriously, for flights over barren, sparsely-inhabited stretches of the Arctic would yield no information useful either for disarmament or for the prevention of a surprise attack . . .”<sup>36</sup> Referring to the Western proposal as a “trick” the Soviet Union criticised the concept of aerial photography, stating that it would not shift disarmament out of its current deadlock and would not prevent surprise attack.

In spite of the Soviet condemnation of the proposals, on 29 August 1957, the four Western powers submitted a working paper outlining their

---

34. Annex 1, DC/113, (1957-1958) *Disarmament Commission Official Records*, at 57-58.

35. Annex 4, DC/113, *Ibid.*, at 69.

36. *Ibid.*, at 70.

ideas about how an inspection zone might be implemented. In a controversial move, the working paper linked progress on any one of the proposals to progress on the others: "This working paper is offered for negotiation on the understanding that its provisions are inseparable. Failure to fulfil any of the provisions of the Convention would create a situation calling for examination at the request of any party."<sup>37</sup>

(xxi) *The Canadian Position*

In a statement on the day of the presentation of the working paper to the Subcommittee, Charles Ritchie expressed Canada's support for the four power proposals. He declared that with respect to the inspection provision: "We are willing not only to accept the various measures of inspection proposed, but also to contribute, within our capabilities, to the manning, equipment, installation and maintenance of the various systems envisaged."<sup>38</sup> In a statement before the United Nations General Assembly, Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker reiterated Canada's support for the proposals. He noted that Canada faced surprise attack threats from the Arctic regions and stated that Canada had no aggressive intentions against the Soviet Union.<sup>39</sup>

(xxii) *Subcommittee Activities Draw to a Close*

During the final 1957 meetings of the Subcommittee, the committee failed to establish an agenda for future work, or to agree on a date for the resumption of talks. A variety of factors played a role in bringing this situation about. Within the Soviet Union a battle over the top leadership position was occurring at the Kremlin and in the summer of 1957, Khrushchev emerged as the victor.

Similarly, the US was experiencing difficulties in maintaining a coherent disarmament staff. Harold Stassen had been acting as the US representative at the negotiations. During 1957 the question of whether negotiating positions he had put forward at the negotiations had been approved by the Administration or whether he had been given free rein created some controversy in Washington and led to some readjustments of personnel within the US delegation.

Finally, nuclear testing had emerged as a central issue for discussion. A ban on nuclear testing was a goal that had garnered support from a large number of countries around the world and was seen as a concrete

---

37. Annex 5, *Ibid.*, at 78.

38. Annex 9, *Ibid.*, at 98.

39. "Canada and the United Nations", *Statements and Speeches*, 57/33, Ottawa, Department of External Affairs, 23 September 1957, at 5.



measure that would be a major step along the road to controlling nuclear weapons. Testing proposals thus received an increasing amount of attention, drawing the emphasis away from longer-term comprehensive disarmament proposals.

(xxiii) *Open Skies at the Security Council*

After the Soviet dismissal of the inspection zones proposed by the West in 1957, it seemed that Open Skies would be put aside as an issue for negotiation. However, a further opportunity for proposing an Open Skies arrangement in the Arctic presented itself in April 1958 when the Soviet Union lodged a complaint in the United Nations Security Council about US bomber flights over the Arctic in the direction of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union claimed that the US had frequently sent bombers loaded with hydrogen and atomic bombs across the Arctic towards the Soviet Union in response to warning signals from the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line. The Soviet Union called the bomber flights a "direct provocation". In an effort to ensure that the situation did not develop into one which might threaten peace, the Soviet Union submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council calling upon the US to cease the flights.<sup>40</sup>

In response, the US representative reminded the Security Council that the Soviet Union had turned down a Western proposal to undertake mutual aerial inspection of the Arctic region and suggested that the Soviet concerns could be dealt with if they would agree to undertake the technical studies previously proposed with a view to developing such a system.<sup>41</sup>

In protest to the way the Security Council meeting was carried out the Soviet Union withdrew its draft resolution. At that point that United States chose to take the initiative and on 28 April 1958, President Eisenhower requested a meeting of the Security Council to discuss the possibility of establishing an inspection system for the Arctic.

The US proposal called for a zone of inspection which would include all territory north of the Arctic Circle in the territories of Canada, Denmark, Norway, the US and the Soviet Union along with Canadian, US and Soviet territory west of 140 degrees W. longitude, east of 160 degrees E. longitude and north of 50 degree N. latitude. This area was deemed to be a principal area for surprise attack and the proposal asked

---

40. Un Doc. S/PV.813, 21 April 1958, at 7, (1958) *Security Council Official Records*, (New York: United Nations, 1958).

41. *Ibid.*, at 11.

those countries involved to undertake technical discussions of the type of arrangements which might be established.<sup>42</sup>

The Soviet Union spoke against the US resolution. It claimed, as it had done in the past, that such a proposal did little to prevent surprise attack and that it was an attempt on the part of the US to gather espionage information about the Soviet Union.

In an unusual step, the Secretary General of the United Nations spoke in favour of the US proposal at the Security Council meeting. He said: "The stalemate in the field of disarmament has been permitted to last far too long. Attempts to break it through negotiations have so far proved of no avail. . . . Such initiatives as those . . . today being considered by the Security Council, are steps which could make a dent in the disarmament problem. They might have a major impact if treated in good faith. . . And they could, if followed through, provide a first frail basis for the development of some kind of trust."<sup>43</sup>

#### (xxiv) *The Soviet Veto*

The vote on the US resolution was taken on 2 May 1958. Ten of eleven Security Council members voted in favour of the resolution. The eleventh member, the Soviet Union, used its veto to defeat the resolution.

The Security Council resolution was as clear as any of the Open Skies proposals had ever come to fruition. However, the use of the veto by the Soviet Union was not a surprise, given previous Soviet responses to Arctic zone proposals. A press report after the vote quoted a US spokesperson as saying that the US would continue to look for alternative proposals, but that they "won't continue to beat on a locked door".<sup>44</sup>

#### (xxv) *Canadian Position*

Prior to the debate in the Security Council, Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker wrote to Khrushchev and offered to allow Soviet inspection of Canadian territory in return for reciprocal rights in the Soviet Union: "I give assurance that in the context of a disarmament agreement the Canadian government would be willing to open all or part of Canada to aerial and ground inspection on a basis of reciprocity. It seems to me that this is the type of proposal which should prove attractive to both our countries since we are neighbours across the Arctic".<sup>45</sup>

---

42. Un Doc. S/PV.814, 29 April 1958, at 7-9, *Ibid*.

43. Un Doc. S/PV.815, 29 April 1958, at 17-18, *Ibid*.

44. L. Parrott, "Won't Stop Trying", *Globe and Mail* (5 May 1958) at 1.

45. Quoted in: *House of Commons Debates*, 11 February 1960, at 991.

During the Security Council debate, Canada's representative, Charles Ritchie, reiterated Canada's willingness to open up its territory to inspection. Mr. Ritchie made clear that the Canadian Government understood the implications of its acceptance of such a proposal:

We recognize that the establishment of a system of safeguards which included Canadian territory would mean that there might be international teams of observers, equipped with electronic devices and the necessary communications, stationed in Canada, with certain rights of inspection and freedom of movement. We further recognize that foreign aircraft for international inspection purposes might be authorized to fly over Canada and that logistical support elements for such aircraft would probably be stationed in Canada. We also recognize that Canada might well be called upon to provide personnel, aircraft and other kinds of support as a contribution to the system. These various obligations are considered acceptable in principle, subject to the negotiation of the details on an equitable basis.<sup>46</sup>

After the failure of the US resolution at the Security Council, Prime Minister Diefenbaker wrote to Khrushchev again, stating: "Let me repeat here, Mr. Chairman, that we stand by our offer to make available for international inspection or control any part of our territory, in exchange for a comparable concession on your part. . . . When there is by your own admission, a danger of nuclear war breaking out by accident of miscalculation, it is difficult for Canadians to comprehend your refusal to engage even in technical discussions intended to explore the feasibility of an international system of control."<sup>47</sup> Later that month Khrushchev responded by reminding Diefenbaker of the Soviet offer for a European zone; he did not respond directly to the offer of reciprocal inspection in the Arctic.<sup>48</sup>

#### (xxvi) *The Surprise Attack Conference*

During his ongoing correspondence with Khrushchev, President Eisenhower proposed that the two countries take part in a technical conference on measures to prevent surprise attack. Khrushchev responded positively to the proposal and the terms of reference were established in further correspondence. The conference was to deal with practical methods of preventing surprise attack, although the Soviet Government stated that the recommendations should be for methods working in conjunction with "definite steps in the field of disarm-

---

46. UN Doc. S/PV.815, 29 April 1958, at 3.

47. Quoted in "NATO and Istanbul", (Howard Green), *Statements and Speeches*, 60/16, Ottawa, Department of External Affairs, 9 May 1960.

48. Response quoted in *House of Commons Debates*, 11 February 1960, at 971.

ment.”<sup>49</sup> The conference ran from 10 November to 18 December 1958 and involved ten countries, ten Western countries and ten from the Eastern bloc.

Open Skies was a proposal that did not play a role at the conference, but systems of aerial reconnaissance were discussed. The US submitted a series of working papers, among them a discussion of a system of aerial observation for monitoring long-range bomber forces. Under this system, any country involved would be subject to a complete aerial survey which would be supplemented by ground observation and inspection to military airfields.

The Soviet proposals concentrated on the European region. Along with proposals for a nuclear-free zone in central Europe, the Soviet Union repeated its proposal for a central European zone which would be subject to aerial and ground inspection. In a new twist, the Soviet Union also proposed that an aerial inspection zone which included eastern Siberia and the western half of the US, and a zone over Iran, Japan and Okinawa, be established. Following the Western lead, the Soviet Union linked acceptance of the Soviet-US zone proposal to acceptance of a ground-aerial inspection zone in Europe.

These proposals were far more detailed than previous Soviet proposals had been, but revealed a narrow approach to the inspection issue. The aerial inspection provisions allowed representatives of “the other side” to accompany the air groups but inspection teams would photograph their own country. The photographs would be processed and interpreted by a centre at which both sides were represented.<sup>50</sup>

Although the technical conference was considerably more successful in developing the substantive issues than the UN Subcommittee had been, the discussions were suspended in December 1958 and were not reconvened.

### (xxvii) *Nuclear Testing and the U-2*

It was not until late 1959 that the four major powers agreed to procedures for continuing with discussions on disarmament.<sup>51</sup> Negotiations therefore did not resume until 1960. The proposals for mutual inspection zones continued to play a role in the larger disarmament proposals. However, there was little separate discussion of

---

49. “Note from the Soviet Foreign Ministry to the American Embassy Regarding Surprise Attack Negotiations”, *Department of State Bulletin*, 24 November 1958, at 816.

50. Bechhoeffer, *op.cit.* at 480.

51. In part this delay was due to an ongoing debate about the enlargement of the Disarmament Commission.

the idea. This set of disarmament negotiations were overshadowed by discussions on limiting nuclear testing. They were further waylaid by the cancellation of a planned summit meeting in May 1960.

The May 1960 summit meeting was cancelled in the political fallout from the shooting down of a US reconnaissance plane, the U-2, over the Soviet Union on 1 May 1960. The unilateral US reconnaissance flights being carried out by the U-2 had been going on since 1956, one year after the Open Skies proposal had been made, and the plane itself was under development at the time Eisenhower first made his proposal. There is no evidence that the Open Skies proposal was made in an effort to find a legal way of carrying out a mission the US was going to go ahead with anyway. Although Open Skies would clearly make the U-2 flights more acceptable, this specific motive was not a driving force in the making of the proposal.

Along with the prominence of the nuclear testing issue, two other developments led to the fading of the Open Skies question. The advent of ballistic missiles, as carriers of nuclear weapons, in the late 1950s, changed the nature of the reconnaissance equation. Warning time between the launching of a nuclear attack and its arrival was shortened. The attack could now come from outer space as opposed to an attack by bombers. Most importantly, ballistic missile launching installations were thought to be easily concealed from aerial reconnaissance.

A second technological innovation was the use of satellites for reconnaissance purposes. Although satellite photography did not provide an identical capability to aerial reconnaissance, the ability of a nation to carry out such surveillance without infringing on national airspace quickly gained prominence and acceptance.

#### (xxviii) *The Canadian Offer Stands*

After the shooting down of the U-2, Canadian Prime Minister Diefenbaker announced that the previous offer to the Soviet Union for a mutual inspection arrangement was still in place.<sup>52</sup> Inspection and Open Skies however, had faded from the agenda of the superpowers and no response to the offer was made.

#### (xxix) *Open Skies Revived*

Open Skies as a proposal, received relatively little attention between the early 1960s and 1989. Aerial reconnaissance as a method played a

---

52. "Western Policy Re-Examined", *Statements and Speeches*, 60/21, Ottawa, Department of External Affairs, 5 June 1960, at 5.

general role in the negotiations on general and complete disarmament and in the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) Talks that took place between NATO and the Warsaw Pact between 1973 and 1988. In an era of satellite photography, aerial reconnaissance remains as a useful method of verification.

Aerial reconnaissance has also played a role in peacekeeping. Under the Sinai agreements, for example, the UD carried out aerial surveillance over the zones in question until the Israeli withdrawal. In this instance, aerial reconnaissance was one of a number of different methods of verification used to verify the Sinai agreements.<sup>53</sup>

In September 1986, the twenty-three members of the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances, along with twelve other neutral and non-alligned European states, signed the Stockholm Declaration on Confidence and Security-building Measures in Europe (the Stockholm Declaration).<sup>54</sup> The purpose of the declaration was to provide a system of monitoring and observation of major military activities in Europe. A combination of aerial and ground inspection measures, similar in theory to the combined Open Skies and Soviet ground control posts proposal, are included in the Declaration. Each inspection team is accompanied by a member of the host government. The aircraft to be used is chosen by mutual consent. The flight path is controlled by the inspectors who also furnish the equipment needed.

### III. *Revival*

#### (i) *The Bush Proposal*

In the first foreign policy speech of his Presidency, on 12 May 1989, George Bush revived the Open Skies idea. President Bush needed to seize the initiative in the arms control field in order to overcome the general perception that the Soviet Union was providing creative proposals with major concessions while the US was playing a reactive role. The revival of the Open Skies proposal thus came as part of a package of “new” ideas which were to restore the initiative to the US.

As part of a call to the Soviet Union to entrench its new policy of openness, Bush made reference to the original Eisenhower proposal and said:

---

53. See: B. Mandell, *The Sinai Experience: Lessons in Multimethod Arms Control Verification and Risk Management*, (Ottawa: Arms Control Verification Studies no. 2, Department of External Affairs, September 1987).

54. *Document of the Stockholm Conference: On confidence and security-building measures and disarmament in Europe convened in accordance with the relevant provisions of the concluding document of the Madrid meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, September 1986.

Let us again explore that proposal, but on a broader, more intrusive and radical basis — one which I hope would include allies on both sides. We suggest that those countries that wish to examine this proposal meet soon to work out the necessary operational details, separately from other arms control negotiations. Such surveillance flights, complementing satellites, would provide regular scrutiny for both sides. Such unprecedented territorial access would show the world the meaning of the concept of openness.<sup>55</sup>

In a later speech in Europe, Bush reiterated the proposal while noting that it would contribute to arms control verification: “Satellites are a very important way to verify arms control agreements. But they do not provide constant coverage of the Soviet Union. An Open Skies policy would move both sides closer to a total continuity of coverage, while symbolizing greater openness between East and West.”<sup>56</sup>

An initial reaction from the Soviet Union came in a commentary on the Bush speech in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, which criticised the President’s ideas as “offers from the past”.<sup>57</sup>

#### (ii) *The Canadian Position*

During meetings with President Bush in Washington, prior to the 12 May speech, Prime Minister Mulroney expressed his support for the revival of the Open Skies proposal. The Prime Minister responded positively to the announcement of the proposal and stated his willingness to open Canadian territory to short-notice inspection flights as part of an Open Skies programme, calling on other NATO allies to lend their support to the idea.<sup>58</sup>

In an editorial in the *New York Times*, Canada’s Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, said that Open Skies should be supported because of the important contribution it could make to arms control verification. He placed particular emphasis on the fact that all nations participating in the programme would have the technology available and be able to take part on the basis of their own capabilities.

Only large countries have satellites in the skies. Yet, if we are to have conventional arms control in Europe, it is essential that all parties to the agreement have the ability to assure their publics, on the basis of their own

---

55. “US-Soviet Relations: A New Policy for the 1990s: Remarks Delivered by President George Bush to Texas A&M University; (Ottawa, United States Embassy Text, 89-25) 12 May 1989.

56. “Bush Speech Outlines Four Proposals ‘To Help Europe Become Whole and Free’” (Ottawa, United States Embassy Text, 89-33) 1 June 1989.

57. “Bush’s Texas Speech Repeats ‘Offers from the Past’” *Pravda* (16 May 1989) in *FBIS-Soviet Union* (16 May 1989) at 13.

58. “Prime Minister Welcomes President Bush’s Call for ‘Open Skies’ and Offers to Include Canada” Press Release, Prime Minister’s Office, 12 May 1989.

judgments, that these agreements are being adhered to, and that their security is intact. . . . The verification of a conventional arms control agreement, especially if defenses are to be greatly reduced will require continuous monitoring to prevent a rapid military build-up and to maintain confidence that a surprise attack is not being planned.<sup>59</sup>

(iii) *Soviet Response*

The initial Soviet response was a quiet questioning but, not complete rejection of the idea. However, at a meeting held from 22-23 September 1989 between Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shavardnadze and US Secretary of State James Baker at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the two sides agreed “in principle” to the Open Skies concept and stated their willingness to attend an international conference on the idea. According to the US State Department, the concept would initially be limited to members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact and would be based on flight quotas established according to the geographic size of states.<sup>60</sup>

(iv) *The NATO Basic Elements Paper*

On 15 December 1989 NATO released its “Basic Elements” paper outlining its initial ideas on how the Open Skies system should be organised. The paper stated: “The basic purpose of Open Skies is to encourage reciprocal openness on the part of the participating states and to allow the observation of military activities and installations on their territories, thus enhancing confidence and security.”<sup>61</sup>

The proposals suggested a system based on quotas but with no restrictions on areas to be overflown within states. Flights could be conducted jointly by states within the same alliance and members of the alliances would decide among themselves how to share the information acquired. Host country observers would be permitted on the inspecting aircraft during flight. Some sensors, particularly devices for gathering signals intelligence, would be prohibited, but this would be decided at the negotiations.<sup>62</sup>

(v) *Open Skies Conference*

A first negotiating session on Open Skies, involving all members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact was held from 12-28 February in Ottawa.

---

59. J. Clark, “Don’t Dismiss Open Skies”, *New York Times* (5 June 1989) at 25.

60. US Department of State, US Geneva Mission Text, 23 September 1989, cited in *Arms Control Reporter 1989* Brookline Mass.: IDDS, 1989) at 850.273.

61. “Open Skies Basic Elements”, NATO Press Release, Annex to M-2(89)46, 15 December 1989.

62. *Ibid.*



The Open Skies idea, having been proposed by the US, was now being carried and advocated publicly by Canada, with support from Hungary. On 6 January 1990 Canada responded to a Hungarian invitation to conduct an overflight of Hungarian territory as a demonstration of the type of overflights that would be conducted under Open Skies and as a gesture of goodwill. A reciprocal Hungarian flight over Canada was part of the plan. However, Hungary was not immediately able to carry out the overflight and it was considered possible that the Soviet Union might carry out such a flight on Hungary's behalf.

The first two days of the Ottawa meeting were attended by the foreign ministers of the NATO and Warsaw Pact members. Although all of the opening speeches expressed a desire for Open Skies and a belief that such a system was within reach, the question of German reunification took precedence. Beneath the heavy media attention to the German question however, was the emergence of the Soviet and Warsaw Pact response to the ideas put forward in the NATO Basic Elements paper.

Prior to the Ottawa conference there had been relatively little information available about the nature of the Warsaw Pact position and there was some question of whether a common position would even be developed. Although the Warsaw Pact position was not as detailed as the NATO Basic Elements paper, it was clear that some fundamental differences between the two sides existed.

(vi) *Different Approaches*

The Warsaw Pact called for a regime which would be based on a common fleet of aircraft and sensors in contrast to the NATO idea where each country would use its own aircraft. The Warsaw Pact also proposed that all information gathered on the overflights be processed through a common data processing centre and be available to all parties to the agreement. The overflight system outlined by the Warsaw Pact would be considerably more limited than the NATO proposal in the number of overflights permitted and in terms of the types of sensors that could be used.

After the foreign ministers left the Ottawa meeting, the negotiations broke into four working groups: aircraft and sensors; quotas; flight mission and safety; and, legal issues. Considerable progress was made on developing a joint draft treaty text. However, when the negotiations drew to a close at the end of February, there remained a number of important divergences between the two sides. In a new and interesting twist, it appeared that, with the exception of the Soviet Union, Warsaw Pact members were willing to move to a compromise on key issues. However, Soviet intransigence on key questions, such as quotas, and insistence that

Soviet territory could only be overflown by aircraft provided by the Soviet Union, meant that some important obstacles stood in the way of a final agreement.<sup>63</sup>

(vii) *The Budapest Meeting*

A second round of negotiations took place in Budapest on 23 April 1990. It had been hoped that a final agreement could be reached by 12 May, the first anniversary of the Bush proposal. However, there had been little change in the Soviet position since the Ottawa meeting in February. Continued disagreement over the types of sensors to be permitted, quota numbers, and a Soviet desire that foreign military bases be included in the agreement soon led the delegations to abandon the 12 May deadline.<sup>64</sup>

The four working groups established in Ottawa continued to work on the framework established in Ottawa. The negotiations ended on 11 May 1990. Although a third round of negotiations might occur, no definitive date has been established. There was some hope that new impetus might come from the meeting between Presidents Gorbachev and Bush at the Washington Summit in June. However, the absence of any new movement from either side at the summit suggests that the question is now low on the list of priorities for both superpowers.

(viii) *Key Elements and Related Issues*

This section will examine the purpose, the planned scope, and implementation procedures of the first incarnation (1955-1960) of the Open Skies proposal. The political, legal, and military issues associated with the proposal will also be discussed.

(ix) *Purpose*

The original purpose of the Open Skies proposal, as initially put forward, was to attempt to develop a control or inspection system which could be used to verify a disarmament agreement. It was the US position that verifying a disarmament agreement was inherently difficult and that prior to any final agreement, there must be complete confidence that an adequate system of inspection was possible and available.

---

63. R. Howard, "Talks on Open Skies Adjourn Amid Impasses" *Globe and Mail* (28 February 1990) D. Todd, S. Das, "Soviet Pessimistic about Success as 1st Round Ends Without Deal", *Ottawa Citizen* (28 February 1990) at A5.

64. C. Bohlen, "Open Skies' Talks Hit Snag, Cutting Chances of Pact in May", *New York Times* (24 April 1990) at A14, A. Ferguson, "Soviet Departure sends Open Skies into Nosedive", *Toronto Star* (29 April 1990) at H3, "'Open Skies' Parties Drop Deadline for a Deal", *New York Times* 5 May 1990, at A5.

At the Quantico meetings, where the proposal was first developed, an inspection scheme was chosen as a way of testing the seriousness of the intentions of the Soviet Union. Depending on the response, the US could then go ahead with disarmament or choose the opposite course.

On a specific level, the plan involved an exchange of data on military installations, troop levels, and armaments (blueprints). The exchange would then be verified by a system of aerial reconnaissance and observers on the ground (the latter was incorporated after the original proposal was made). Each side would be certain of the capabilities of the other prior to beginning reductions and would also be confident of the ability of the inspection system to ensure adequate compliance.

Quite quickly after the proposal was first made, the prevention of surprise attack became the second and, later, more prominent purpose of the plan. In this light, mutual aerial surveillance, accompanied by ground observers at key points would act as an ongoing contribution to confidence and a safeguard against preparations of surprise attack by ensuring that there were no major changes in troop concentrations and movements.

## 1. *Scope*

### (i) *Geographical Coverage*

Originally, Open Skies was to apply to the territory of the US and the Soviet Union. Once the Soviet Union agreed to discuss aerial inspection, the discussion shifted towards the idea of beginning with a trial area and progressively expanding the system from there. However, in choosing zones it quickly became apparent that there was difficulty in choosing two areas which were roughly equivalent in their military and security value to each country. Eventually this was one of the reasons for suggesting Arctic zones. It was thought that the relatively small number of important installations in the area would make the Arctic area a good first step.

In the end, a variety of zones were discussed. Using part of central Europe, with variations on the inclusion of US and Soviet territory were the most popular choices. Both the US and the Soviet Union had a large concentration of troops in Central Europe and this area was therefore also the area in which there was fear of surprise attack. Zones in the Far East and over Japan were also proposed by the Soviet Union, but these were never pursued.

### (ii) *The System*

Open Skies was to be comprised of three main elements: an exchange of

blueprints; ground observation teams at key locations; and, mutual aerial reconnaissance.

(a) Exchange of Blueprints

The exchange of blueprints was to involve: “. . . the identification, strength, command structure and disposition of personnel, units and equipment of all major land, sea and air forces, including organized reserves and paramilitary forces; and a complete list of military plants, facilities, and installations with their locations.”<sup>65</sup>

When negotiations shifted to concentrate on different zones, the requirements for data also changed. In these cases the data required were envisaged as encompassing the same type of information as required in the original proposal, but information would only be required on those military forces, facilities and armaments located within the zone. Movements in and out of the zone would be monitored by ground and aerial observations.

(b) Ground Observers

Ground observers would be stationed with the operating forces in question and at military installations and key points such as ports, railway junctions and major roads. They would monitor the movement of troops and armaments. Information collected by the observers could be further checked by aerial reconnaissance. Conversely, questions that arose as a result of an aerial reconnaissance check could be investigated by the ground observation teams.

(c) Aerial Reconnaissance

Each side would be entitled to unlimited, but monitored, aerial reconnaissance of the other's territory. A representative from the host government would be permitted on each flight. The flights, with prior notification, could take place as often as requested. Under a multilateral arrangement, for example a system for a European zone, the permission of the other states involved would need to be obtained.

(iii) *Implementation*<sup>66</sup>

To a certain extent the nature of the implementation process depended on whether the Open Skies proposal was considered on its own, or as part

---

65. Annex 20, Un Doc. DC/71, 1955, at 38.

66. Due to the fact that the US and the Soviet Union never actually entered into detailed negotiations on Open Skies, the implementation details are limited. The information in this section comes from a number of sources but primarily: “Fact Sheet on Aerial Inspection”, prepared by the White House Disarmament Staff, 28 September 1957, as quoted in W.J.

of a larger disarmament proposal. For the most part, this differentiation did not greatly affect the implementation ideas.

(iv) *Using the Aircraft*

Each side would establish a permanent base in the other country from which they would operate the reconnaissance missions. Alternatively, points of entry could be designated for the incoming aircraft. Other air bases would be used only in the case of an emergency.

Each side would use their own aircraft and, as noted above, a representative from the host country would have the right to be on each flight. It is possible that special markings for the plane would be designed, or agreed to by negotiation, to distinguish it from the other aircraft (the use of the UN logo was considered). The aircraft would be subject to inspection by the host government prior to the reconnaissance flight. Special equipment, such as radiation detectors, might be used to ensure that no weapons are concealed on board. The agreement would require that the inspection process not unduly delay the flight of the aircraft.

(v) *Exchanging Information*

An agreed method of exchanging the military blueprints and other important information such as flight plans would need to be established. This might take place in an international control organization established as part of a larger treaty, or as a strictly bilateral exchange.

A schedule for when to exchange designated types of information would be developed by mutual agreement to avoid unstable situations and ensure that simultaneous exchanges occur. In the initial US plan there was provision for immediate spot-checking of the information exchanged. This procedure was never the subject of detailed discussion between the two sides.

(vi) *Restrictions on the Aircraft*

The aircraft must be unarmed. Arrangements for adhering to air traffic control regulations would be negotiated and the crews would be required to keep within the regulations. Beyond this limitation, the aircraft would be free to travel and photograph anywhere within the geographic zone subject to the agreement.

The reconnaissance aircraft would be monitored at all times during its flight, either electronically or through visual contact by an aircraft from

---

Levison, "Capabilities and Limitations of Aerial Inspection", *Inspection for Disarmament*, S. Melman Ed., New York, Columbia University Press, 1958, also: US Outline, Annex 20, UN Doc., DC/71, October 1955.

the host country (which could be armed). If the inspecting aircraft deviated from its flight path it could be forced to land, either by the accompanying host-country aircraft or by an interceptor aircraft. Similar procedures might be established for aircraft entering or leaving the zone or states in question.

(vii) *Information Collection*

The information collected on an inspection flight would be completely controlled by the inspecting country unless otherwise specified in the agreement. Possibly, if a central control organisation was established under the agreement, the information could be processed and distributed jointly.

(viii) *Ground Observations*

The number of observers on each team and their observation rights would be determined by negotiation. Generally, it was envisaged that the ground observers would be based at key locations — railway junctions, major ports, major roadways as well as with the air, navy and ground forces in question. The observers would work in conjunction with the aerial inspection mission, the limits of their geographical scope corresponding to those of the aerial reconnaissance zone. Aerial inspections may occur in response to inspection needs raised by the ground observers or vice versa.

## 2. *Political Aspects*

(i) *Use or Abuse of Information*

One of the initial reactions of the Soviet Union was to claim that the Open Skies plan was a US attempt to conduct espionage missions against the Soviet Union. In the 1950s the Soviet Union was a very closed society, especially with respect to its military activities. Given the openness of US society the Open Skies plan could be interpreted as a way of “getting in” to the Soviet Union. Since the plan was not accompanied by reductions in weapons, the Soviet Union suggested that the US simply wanted to collect information about the Soviet Union with a view to using it against them later.

On a broader level, information could be abused by either side for the purpose of preparing for surprise attack rather than to guard against one. There is no clear way to prevent this from happening other than to rely on the reconnaissance rights contained in the system itself to generate warning signals of such activity.

Two other responses are possible to an Open Skies system. First, such an extensive system may encourage concealment. In the current situation, where reconnaissance satellites are in common usage and a base of knowledge about the other side already exists, this is less of a likelihood, since many checks on activity and information exist. However, during the 1950s, concealing military equipment from aerial reconnaissance was not thought impossible. This was particularly thought to be a problem with missiles, which were just beginning to be developed as nuclear weapon delivery vehicles.

Second, the gathering of specific information about the opponent's military capabilities could include an arms race. Precise knowledge about the capabilities of the other side could encourage a build-up in those systems or capabilities in which it was discovered that the other side was more advanced than previously thought.

(ii) *Unbalanced Approach*

The accusation that the Open Skies plan was an espionage plot against the Soviet Union was symptomatic of a general sense that the plan favoured the US and discriminated against the Soviet Union because of differences in the two societies. McGeorge Bundy notes:

. . . Eisenhower's proposal, taken by itself, was unbalanced. It is quite true that in a larger sense there was and is a Soviet interest in avoiding the kind of American response that fear and ignorance might generate. But it is hardly surprising that leaders still living in the shadow of the all-powerful and all-suspicious Stalin should have been slow to understand the wider advantage of Eisenhower's proposal and quick to observe its immediate one-sidedness. . . . There is no evidence that anyone concerned with the Open Skies proposal ever addressed the question of finding a way to offer a balancing incentive in return for Soviet agreement to aerial inspection. Instead the Americans held to the view that since as a matter of logic inspection was essential to any reliable agreement, their proposal required no balancing concession.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, as indicated in the first section of this paper, the proposal received approval by Dulles, only after its "no-risk" attributes were made clear to him. From the Soviet vantage point, it was difficult not to see the proposal, so comprehensive in its nature and yet without any guarantees of reductions in arms after its implementation, as a political ploy by the US. This problem was the most important obstacle to moving the Open Skies idea beyond the proposal stage.

---

67. M. Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, *op.cit.* at 302.

### (iii) *Choosing a Zone*

As the negotiations developed, emphasis shifted away from the original Open Skies idea to a beginning based on a limited geographical zone. Finding a zone which suited the political needs of each side proved to be difficult.

Within Europe, an agreeable zone needed to meet a number of criterion: the need to include relatively equal levels of forces from both sides; the need to include roughly equal amounts of territory on both sides; if Soviet territory was included in a European zone, how would that be balanced by the US; the US would not agree to a zone that would perpetuate the division of Germany.

The difficulties inherent in this type of balancing act contributed to the attraction of an Arctic zone. A zone in the Arctic would have relatively clear demarcation lines and include a small number of military installations. However, the disadvantage was that imbalance again played a role since the Soviet Union had more military installations and more population within the Arctic areas envisaged than the US.

In the 1956 proposal for a test system, the US put forward specifications for a test zone based on equal numbers of troops and installations rather than geographic limits. Although discussion of this proposal never progressed to a detailed stage, it may have provided a way past the difficulties associated with territorial-oriented zones.

### (iv) *Legal Questions*

Clearly, entry of another state's airspace for purposes of aerial reconnaissance without the permission of the state involved is illegal. This was made clear by the shooting down of the U-2 aircraft in May 1960. However, there is no legal restriction barring a state from deciding to enter into an agreement with another state which gives that state the right to carry out aerial reconnaissance missions over its territory. In 1965 Dennis Aronowitz concluded: Nothing in the Constitution forbids the United States, acting under any of its powers, to give any of its rights in the airspace to others, including foreign governments or international organizations.<sup>68</sup> The question becomes more complex when a number of states are involved. However, the basic premise still applies which is that each state, within its rights as a sovereign nation, is free to make a decision on whether to participate in such a system. No state could be included in an inspection zone without having given its consent.

---

68. D.S. Aronowitz, *Legal Aspects of Arms Control Verification in the United States* (New York: Oceana Publications Inc., 1965) at 137.



### 3. *Military Aspects*

#### (i) *The Advantage of Knowledge*

One of the primary military advantages to come from an Open Skies system is the confirmed, detailed knowledge of the opponent's military capabilities and the access to ongoing information about the opponent's activities that is obtained. This works to decrease the level of distrust between the states involved and provides warning of any effort to prepare for a surprise attack. On the downside, knowledge of the opponent's capabilities may lead to the opposite reaction and encourage concealment and strengthening of military forces and even preparation for attack.

#### (ii) *Reciprocity and Intrusiveness*

On the other side of the coin, there are important military implications for a system in which one's own military capabilities become known to the opponent. In the debates about the Open Skies proposal within the US this factor did not play a major role. To some extent it was assumed that the openness of US society meant that there would not be a great deal the Soviet Union would learn that it did not already know, or at least have a good idea about. The proposal never came close enough to fruition to determine whether this might have become an important issue when faced with the reality of Soviet inspection.

#### (iii) *Technical Issues*

The Open Skies system as envisaged would involve a three stage process: information gathering, information processing (developing the film and interpreting the results), and generating an intelligence evaluation based on those results. In terms of gathering the information, broad aerial searches would determine the accuracy of the data provided in the exchange of blueprints. At the same time, more specific aerial searches would be monitoring major military installations and troop concentrations to keep ongoing watches on important military activities as a safeguard against surprise attack.

#### (iv) *Time Factors*

Estimates at the time of the Open Skies proposal determined that it would take six months to undertake a complete photographic study of the US or the Soviet Union. The estimate was given by the Assistant to the President for Disarmament, Harold Stassen. He noted that: "Starting from opposite sides of the country, 2 standard United States Air Force jet planes can now photograph a band of terrain, given favorable weather,

490 miles wide and 2,700 miles long, the distance from New York to Los Angeles in only 2 hours".<sup>69</sup>

While the technical capabilities were thus sufficient to meet the requirements of the system, there was some question about the ability to adequately handle the amount of data that would be generated by such comprehensive reconnaissance. Detailed estimates done by Walter Levison of Boston University suggested that:

. . . data reduction constitutes a problem of major proportions. The task of examining the 225,000 photograph yielded by the total area search mission in a period of thirty days, for example, is not unreasonable for a group of fifty skilled photointerpreters. With some augmentation, such a group could cope with the returns from the specific objective mission as well. However, in order to make the most of the group's efforts, techniques for gaining rapid access to previous coverage will have to be developed and equipment designed for rapid indexing, storage and retrieval. These must of necessity play a significant role in the success or failure of such an inspection system.<sup>70</sup>

This problem is eased somewhat if the system incorporates ground inspectors. Ground inspection teams can act as an alternative source of information and also as a check of information or analysis generated by the aerial system.

(v) *Finding Ballistic Missiles*

Although experts of the time agreed that aerial reconnaissance could meet the inspection requirements, there was some fear that this would not be the case once ballistic missiles were introduced. It was thought that if an inspection system was in place prior to the preparations of ballistic missile sites, this would be a manageable problem because the preparations would be detected by aerial reconnaissance. However, if the system did not come into being until after the sites had been established, the problem would become more difficult: "Well-camouflaged installations, conceivably for the most part under ground, when completed will present the problem of detection of extremely small object sizes. The task of identifying underground launching sites may be compared to the task of discerning manhole covers from 50,000 feet in

---

69. US Senate, Foreign Relations Committee, *Control and Reduction of Armaments* (Hearing, Part 1) 25 January 1956, at 7.

70. W.J. Levison, "Capabilities and Limitations of Aerial Inspection", *Inspection for Disarmament*, S. Melman, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958) at 73, see also Levison's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Control and Reduction of Armaments* (Hearing, Part 5) 9 April 1956.

the air. Ground inspection would be of even less value in this situation . . .<sup>71</sup>

Some of the issues discussed here were of importance when the Open Skies proposal was proposed because certain technologies — satellites and ballistic missiles — were still under development. Other issues which were not discussed at the time or only treated lightly would have been resolved during the negotiation process if the proposal had ever reached an advanced stage of agreement.

#### IV. *Conclusions*

##### (i) *The Canadian Role*

Canada played an important role in the 1950s debates on Open Skies because of the involvement of its territory and because of its involvement in the UN Subcommittee negotiations. The Canadian Government felt that it could play a useful role in carrying out any Open Skies agreement by providing personnel and resources and by contributing its territory. Above all, it was the contribution to disarmament and the prevention of surprise attack, that might have been achieved by the great openness envisaged under Open Skies, that led to the full support the Canadian Government gave to the idea.

Canada has played a leading role in the current discussions as well. The revival of the Open Skies proposal draws on traditional Canadian support for confidence-building measures and its very strong expertise in verification. On the political side of the equation, one of the Canadian and US motives for giving such vigorous support to the Open Skies is a desire to assure West European members of NATO that both Canada and the US are willing to accept intrusive inspection from Warsaw Pact members. This relates to the possible agreement on reducing conventional forces in Europe. If implemented, such an agreement would require very intrusive, very extensive verification measures in Western Europe with limited, if any, intrusiveness required on both US and Canadian territory. Because Open Skies involves both US and Canadian territory, the two countries can demonstrate their willingness to share some of the burden of intrusiveness.

From the Canadian perspective, Open Skies will also help entrench the North American connection to Europe at a time when changes in Europe may encourage an increased separation between European and North American interests (this phenomenon is often referred to as a two-pillared NATO).

---

71. Levison, "Aerial Inspection", *op.cit.* at 74.

(ii) *Some Comparisons*

During the 1950s the Open Skies proposal took on a variety of forms in a variety of forums. Its initial purpose was to test Soviet seriousness on disarmament and to develop an inspection system prior to developing a disarmament agreement. At its height it was to form a basis for a system of safeguards for preventing surprise attacks. In the end, because of its lack of connection to measures which limited or reduced arms and thus its political tilt, the proposal never came within reach of a final agreement.

When President Bush revived the Open Skies idea in May 1990, it was with an emphasis on formalizing a new Soviet openness on military matters and building on changes in the NATO-Warsaw Pact relationship by creating a confidence-building system which would also aid arms control.

The NATO position, discussed above, envisages a system based on quotas. It proposes an upper limit on the number of overflights to be accepted by each state, but intends that frequent overflights should be permitted. Overall it is thought that a rough equivalence in total quotas should be established between the two alliances. The Soviet Union wanted a very low quota number, around 30, as compared to NATO suggestions of around 150 for each alliance. Under the 1955 proposal the US and the Soviet Union would have had the right to unlimited numbers of overflights. Both the current and past proposals would allow flights over any part of the state's territory, with no restricted areas (some provision for safety restrictions was discussed in both cases).

Under the NATO proposal, a state wishing to undertake an overflight will be required to give 16 hours notice of arrival at the designated point of entry of the country to be inspected. The inspecting state will file a flight plan within six hours of arrival. At this point there will be a 24 hour period for inspection and servicing of the aircraft and checking the flight plan for safety reasons. Host country observers will be present during the flight and will have unrestricted access to all parts of the aircraft. During the flight, loitering, that is remaining over a given area for an extended length of time, will not be permitted.

The Soviet Union initially advocated that the aircraft be provided by the country being inspected and that host nation crews be used to fly the plane. This would mean that an overflight of the Soviet Union would be carried out in a Soviet aircraft with a Soviet crew. The Soviet Union argued that this would allow the host country to be sure that no prohibited sensors or equipment were on board the plane. They later suggested that national aircraft might be prepositioned so that the host country could carry out inspections or that an international airfield be

dedicated to inspection aircraft and national aircraft could be prepositioned there for inspection.

Two other issues, sensors and the use of information, have been points of divergence between the two sides. Again, the Soviet Union advocated strict limits on sensors while NATO wanted to allow sensors that would have an all-weather capability. The other Warsaw Pact nations were willing to accept NATO suggestions for sensors, such as synthetic aperture radar and infrared sensors, on the condition that these technologies would be made available to Warsaw Pact nations. Under the NATO plan, information may be shared within the alliance according to rules established by each alliance. However, the Soviet Union wants a common data-processing centre where all parties would have access to all information gathered.

The first difference between the Eisenhower Open Skies proposal and the concept currently under consideration is the inclusion of all members of the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances in the current system. Although the current proposal is thus wider in its geographic scope, it is more limited in its substances. In the 1950s there was little discussion of the types of sensors that would be used and potential limitations on them. The primary concern was ensuring that the overflying aircraft was not secretly armed or did not divert from its flight path. Technology may have become a problem if the negotiations had progressed, with respect to the difference in US and Soviet reconnaissance capabilities at the time. No quotas were to be established in the 1950s and since it was thought that planes would be prepositioned at bases within each country, flights would be carried out at shorter notice than is currently under discussion.

Two notable similarities exist in the Soviet position. Both in the 1950s and today, the Soviet Union has objected to the fact that foreign military bases, for example US military bases in Japan, are not included within the scope of the proposal. Similarly, the Soviet Union has objected to the lack of a direct link between the proposal and other arms control measures. Both of these objections reflect the sense that the proposal's hidden aim is to force the Soviet Union to prove itself and is a test of Soviet willingness to meet Western standards.

Perhaps most importantly, the current situation is markedly different from the world scene faced by President Eisenhower when he made his Open Skies proposal in 1955. Satellites have been successfully developed and used for reconnaissance purposes for a number of years. Their use as gatherers of military intelligence is common and is considered legitimate. They have played an important role, and indeed made possible, the verification of strategic arms control treaties.

In the mid-1950s nuclear missiles were a likely development, but had not yet materialized in the military forces of the two superpowers. Nuclear arsenals of the time consisted mainly of bombers armed with nuclear weapons. Since then ballistic missiles have become an important part of the nuclear arsenals of the US and the Soviet Union, as well as China, France and Britain. Nuclear arsenals are deployed in a triad of forces based on the ground, on submarines, and on bombers.

### (iii) *Arms Control*

Still, there is a role to be played by aerial reconnaissance. Unlike the absence of arms control treaties that characterized the late 1950's, the present situation draws on a number of arms control agreements. In 1987 the US and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty for the Elimination of Intermediate- and Shorter-range Missiles (the INF Treaty). It is the first time that the superpowers have agreed to eliminate a class of missiles and is the first time the superpowers have implemented a treaty requiring extensive on-site inspection. The verification measures contained in the INF Treaty are also important because they have come after a divisive and politically charged superpower debate on arms control treaty compliance.

On the other side of the coin, the verification problem has been made more difficult by the development of new technologies and methods of deployment. Cruise missiles now play an important role in the forces of both the Soviet Union and the United States. Their small size and their versatility, are a difficult challenge for verification techniques. Mobile ICBMs, now deployed in the Soviet Union, and under development in the US, also complicate the verification equation.

Aerial photography has a number of advantages over satellite photography. It provides more flexibility than satellites because it can reach a given area on short-notice. Satellites follow pre-determined routes which may not cover the required area or may not get to it in time. In some cases better resolution can be achieved because the aircraft can photograph at low altitudes. Aircraft can also go back to a site more frequently within a short time-frame.

An important role could be played by Open Skies with respect to the current negotiations on conventional force reductions. Open Skies could aid both sides by encouraging an atmosphere of confidence and by providing concrete evidence that unilateral reductions have in fact been carried out as promised. This avoids an atmosphere of political accusation that sometimes surrounds unilateral reductions. It could also be very useful in aiding verification measures related to an agreement on reducing conventional forces, both before and after the agreement is concluded.

Negotiations on conventional forces involve a number of difficult and complex issues, one of the most important of these is how to deal with data requirements. How and whether to establish an agreed data base proved to be a major issue of disagreement between the two sides in the MBFR negotiations and contributed to a lengthy period of stalemate. A system of aerial inspection related to force reductions in Europe could act as an important confidence-building measure by indicating that a system is feasible and by providing both sides with important data.

(iv) *Political Problems*

President Bush's Open Skies proposal has been couched in terms similar to that of President Eisenhower's proposal. That is to say that it is not tied to a specific agreement on arms control. Unlike Eisenhower, who was faced with a very close Soviet society, the Bush proposal is intended to push open an already encouragingly open Soviet society.

In 1955 the Open Skies proposal was put forward as a test of Soviet seriousness about disarmament and as a way of testing an inspection system. In the current circumstances, after years of relying on national technical means (NTM) of verification, the use of the IAEA system to monitor the NPT, and the implementation of a Stockholm Accord and the INF Treaty, the need to test an inspection system no longer holds water as a rationale for the proposal. Under Gorbachev's leadership the Soviet Union has moved towards deep cuts in strategic nuclear weapons, signed the INF Treaty, and announced unilateral troop reductions in Europe. There seems, therefore, only limited need, if any, to test Soviet seriousness about arms control.

The emphasis then falls, as it has done in the Bush speeches, on a desire to test or expand openness in the Soviet Union. As with the Eisenhower proposal, this emphasis gives the impression that the proposal is a political ploy — the no-risk, drama and substance type of proposal that drew Dulles' approval in 1955. This may particularly be the case given Bush's need to be seen as taking the lead in arms control, rather than simply responding to Soviet initiatives. In the absence of a connection to specific reductions the familiar arguments come to the forefront: the proposal is stacked against the Soviet Union, or worse it is simply a way of collecting espionage information about the Soviet Union. This stigma of political public relations has haunted the Open Skies proposal both in the 1950s and in the current context.

There are two main objectives to the current proposal: confidence-building, and aiding arms control. If successfully negotiated and implemented, the system could be of great importance at a critical time for East-West relations and for the future of Europe. The degree to which Open Skies is successful in this regard will depend on the nature of the

system that results. A system more limited than the one proposed by NATO could still make a contribution. At the same time, there is also room for a system which is not as alliance oriented as the one proposed by NATO.

It is very important that, whatever the nature of the Open Skies system that results, it be structured in such a way that it can adequately deal with the changes that are likely to occur as Europe undergoes further transition. This has been a key underlying issue in the current negotiations. During discussions on the NATO Basic Elements paper there was a strong difference of opinion between the US and France over whether an Open Skies system could be based on a bloc-to-bloc system or whether it should include all of the thirty-three European states involved in the Conference on Security and Co-operation (CSCE) in Europe. France advocated the wider system while the US wanted to keep the proposal limited to the two alliances, at least until the system was in operation. This failure to recognize the changing nature of Europe and the Warsaw Pact alliance itself is a serious problem. If the Open Skies negotiations manage to reach a final agreement as currently envisaged, its success will depend entirely on the existence of a mechanism which will take the regime beyond the now anachronistic alliance to alliance structures.

Open Skies, in its revived format, appears to be following its predecessor by simply fading from the superpower agenda. Its one hope for success may stem from the inclusion of the members of the two alliances at a time when the alliances and Europe itself are undergoing tremendous transition. If a revised, flexible Open Skies regime can provide new confidence, not just against surprise attack as was envisaged in the 1950s, but confidence in an integrated and entrenched openness among European states, it may be a useful process (rather than an end) in developing new European arms control and political structures. As such, its success would depend on the US and the Soviet Union advocating Open Skies in this type of role. This seems at present, a limited possibility.