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Globalising the INF Treaty: The best way to inhibit the proliferation of long-range missiles?

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Introduction

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed by US and Soviet representatives on 8 December 1987, was an important and improbable accomplishment. It provided for the complete elimination of a slice of the nuclear weapon delivery capacity of the two superpowers, a characteristic that made it famous within the anti-nuclear movement and provided a new benchmark for the arms control community.[1]

In numerical terms, the INF Treaty involved notably asymmetric reductions. The Soviet Union agreed to destroy more than twice as many delivery vehicles (1846) as the United States (846). Although the warheads involved did not have to be destroyed, the imbalance on this index was even more pronounced as all the US systems carried one warhead while the primary Soviet system (the SS-20) carried three. In addition, British and French nuclear forces remained unrestricted, as did long-range nuclear-capable naval cruise missiles—an emerging capability in which the United States enjoyed a significant advantage. Finally, the Treaty's exclusive focus on land-based systems meant that the Soviet Union had to scrap significant numbers of INF systems that addressed its defence and security interests in theatres other than Europe, without the United States having to make offsetting sacrifices in existing or potential future capabilities.

In retrospect, therefore, the fact that the Treaty was concluded and implemented in full may have had a great deal more to do with the Soviet Union coming to terms with the need to step away from trying to maintain a military balance with the West than was apparent at the time. This historic determination by the Soviet leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev was confirmed by the subsequent Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty. Although the formal conclusion of negotiations on this agreement in November 1990 coincided with, and was utterly overshadowed by, the fall of the Berlin Wall, its broad parameters had become clear somewhat earlier.[2] And these parameters involved sharply asymmetric reductions in and redeployments of Soviet and Warsaw Pact conventional forces arrayed along the 'iron curtain', reflecting, in effect, Moscow's concession of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s core allegation throughout the Cold War that the Soviet Union had accumulated an intimidating preponderance of conventional forces in the European theatre, and that these forces were postured for offensive operations.

Background paper originally prepared for the East West Institute, Brussels.

INF: The wider context

The INF Treaty was the product of a unique set of circumstances: a unique (bipolar) configuration of the international system; the uniquely comprehensive (political, economic, social and military) nature of the contest between the two core adversaries; the unique risk in the nuclear age of mutual extinction in the event of total war; and a unique geographic relationship both between the principal adversaries and between them and the pre-eminent political prize of Western Europe.

By 1970, the nuclear weapon capacities of the United States and the Soviet Union, along with doctrinal developments, command and control, early warning and so forth, had reached a substantial measure of maturity. Both sides had perfected a triad of weapons systems (land and sea-based missiles plus long-range bombers) dedicated to the mission of putting the opposing homeland at risk, together with a plethora of systems (many of which were technological stepping stones en route to the systems with intercontinental or strategic reach) generically labelled sub-strategic in the superpower context, and often further categorised as 'theatre' and 'tactical' systems. In addition, the intellectual dilemma of reconciling the conduct of a deeply adversarial relationship with the recognised lunacy of unleashing capacities for 'assured destruction' led to a ceaseless examination of the reliability and robustness of nuclear deterrence. This included, in particular, exquisitely detailed explorations of how the inevitable asymmetries in nuclear force structures could result in the opposing leadership coming to the view that it had, or could create circumstances in which it would have, a meaningful psychological edge and create a propensity to take risks to secure a favourable change in the status quo. Deterrence had to function pre-emptively and discourage challenges to the status quo. There was little appetite to test the ability to bring deterrent capacities to bear successfully in the context of a crisis brought on by an action to change the status quo—a judgement strongly reinforced by the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

The INF issue arose out of this context. The Soviet Union and its allies had a degree of superiority in conventional forces in the European theatre (together with geographic proximity and strategic depth) that the NATO states never really aspired to match, obliging them to lean relatively more heavily on the threat to resist aggression with nuclear weapons. As Soviet nuclear capacities expanded through a secure second strike capacity against the United States and then trended to rough parity at the strategic level, the arrangements within NATO to 'extend' US nuclear deterrent capacities to Western Europe and to preserve the credibility of a nuclear response to aggression with conventional forces became increasingly complex. US tactical nuclear systems (some 7000 of them) were deliberately dispersed among its European allies to spread risks and responsibilities, and were in some cases subject to 'dual key' arrangements so that both the United States and host national personnel had to been involved in using them. The British and French independent nuclear deterrents were also part of the mix, as were Delphic allusions from the United States about its willingness to risk escalation to a strategic nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union along with strenuous efforts to shape its strategic nuclear posture to render such an escalation unattractive to Moscow.

Political contentment with these arrangements was rare and short-lived. Europeans wavered between concerns that the US commitment to their defence would evaporate in contingencies that made real the risk of nuclear attacks on the US homeland, and concerns that the United States was overly confident of 'containing' any conflict to the European

theatre and therefore inclined to be less risk averse than Europeans would prefer. In the jargon of the day, both circumstances reflected the 'decoupling' of the defence of Europe from that of the United States. The United States, while demonstrably prepared to assume great risks to defend its European allies, naturally aspired to circumstances that provided the most reliable possible 'firebreak' between conflict in Europe and an exchange of strategic nuclear weapons with the Soviet Union. For its part, the Soviet Union naturally insisted that it would treat any attack by US forces/weapons against itself or its adjacent allies from European locations as an attack by the United States against the Soviet Union and invite retaliation against the US homeland.

As the central strategic nuclear balance trended toward increasingly robust stability in the early 1970s (albeit with projections about prospective future developments providing ample fuel for countervailing capability developments and deployments), the perennial issue of the reliability of deterrence postures down the escalatory chain attracted stronger scrutiny. NATO's strategy of 'flexible response' overtly declared that, while the alliance was a defensive organisation that would never initiate hostilities, it reserved the right to be the first to escalate to the use of nuclear weapons if it could not prevail over an aggressor with its conventional forces. The question was always whether a state disposed to the use of force against Western Europe would deem this threat to escalate to the use of nuclear weapons as credible and to be deterred, or whether its leadership could reason that it could make more credible nuclear counter-threats and thus be confident that NATO would be forced to accept the outcome of an engagement limited to conventional forces.

The possession by both the United States and the Soviet Union of a secure second-strike capability gave rise to the condition of mutually assured destruction, a condition that ensured compelling disincentives to the offensive use of strategic nuclear weapons. While this condition made the central strategic nuclear balance more stable and resilient, it simultaneously weakened the credibility of extended deterrence because the latter was predicated on threats to go on the offensive with nuclear weapons.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, both sides of the iron curtain had accumulated an array of aircraft and missile nuclear delivery systems that were neither unambiguously tactical (that is, having a range of a few tens of kilometres) nor had any relevance to the central nuclear balance where the requisite range exceeded 5000 kilometres. On the NATO side in the 1970s, in addition to the still-evolving British and French nuclear forces, the United States had significant numbers of modern aircraft, including the particularly potent F-111 medium bomber, and 180 land-mobile, solid-fuel *Pershing* IA missiles with a range of 740 kilometres. The *Pershing* IA was accurate (a CEP of 400 metres) and carried a massive 400 kiloton warhead (20 times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945) and superseded an earlier generation of nuclear-capable missiles (including the *Thor*, *Jupiter*, and *Sergeant* systems) that had also been deployed in Europe from the mid-1950s. Soviet analysts, disposed in any case to viewing Western Europe as a US forward base, could, and did, contend that comparable systems on their side were overmatched quantitatively and qualitatively: obsolete bomber aircraft and about 600–700 SS-4 *Sandal* and SS-5 *Skean* ballistic missiles with a range around 2000 kilometres. Both missiles were developed in the mid to late 1950s and could reasonably be described as technological stepping stones on the road to the intercontinental ballistic missile, and targeted against Europe as the best available proxy for the United States itself: they had storable liquid fuel (which increased reaction time), were not particularly accurate (but sported a massive warhead in the megaton range), and many were deployed in vulnerable 'soft' sites rather than in concrete silos. In addition, both sides (but especially the Soviet

Union) possessed shorter-range systems that could accomplish some of the target coverage possible with the systems just described, through being mobile and thus capable of deploying right up to the front line. The *Sergeant* and *Lance* missiles on the US side, and the SS-12 *Scaleboard* and SS-23 *Spider* on the Soviet side are cases in point.

INF: Why it became 'the' issue

It could fairly be said that, through the 1960s and despite the deployment of formidable forces, the relative capacities in sub-strategic nuclear weaponry in the European theatre was not an issue that attracted the same close political and military scrutiny as developments in strategic nuclear forces. This changed in the first half of the 1970s. A major part of the explanation lies in the initial codification of strategic parity in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) I/Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) accords of 1972, the identification of the development by the Soviet Union of a family of fourth-generation intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) (numbered 16 to 19 in the NATO system) and the emergence in the United States of a strenuous campaign to alert the nation to the capacities inherent in the prospective Soviet strategic force to yield meaningful strategic nuclear superiority. These perceptions about the strategic balance, that is, of a US check-mated and prospectively out-classed at the highest level, translated into a sharper focus on the implications for the credibility of NATO's deterrent posture of the United States having seemingly lost an escalatory option, and of the Soviet Union possibly acquiring one.

In this newly sensitised atmosphere, the West detected the first indications of a new intermediate-range ballistic missile, a weapon later designated the SS-20 *Saber* (or RSD-10 *Pioneer* in its Soviet classification). The characteristics of the SS-20 were central to the political impact it was to generate. The Soviet Union was seen as bringing to bear on the European front all of its front-line ballistic missile technologies: the SS-20 displayed a range capability right up to (but not beyond) the threshold that would make it accountable in negotiations on strategic forces (5500 kilometres); it was solid-fuelled, so able to react very quickly; it was fully mobile on its own transporter/erector/launcher, so hard to find and to target; and it sported a guidance/warhead package equivalent to the best the Soviet Union deployed on its ICBMs (three accurate, independently targetable 150 kiloton warheads per missile). This image was intensified when it was confirmed in 1975–76 that the SS-20 was in fact a two stage version of the SS-X-16, one of the fourth-generation ICBMs that the Soviet Union had under development. On the aircraft front, the Tupolev Tu-22M *Backfire* (first test flight in 1971) had comparable capabilities, that is, fractionally below that required to clearly qualify as a strategic system but a stark improvement on the aircraft it was replacing.

The SS-20 became operational in 1976. Although 499 launchers and 654 missiles were ultimately declared and subsequently destroyed under the INF Treaty, the deployed force eventually stabilised at 405 missiles spread across 48 bases located in both the western and eastern regions of the Soviet Union. In the second half of the 1970s, NATO's political leadership gravitated toward the view that the prospective SS-20 force would give the Soviet Union a prompt hard-target capacity against the full-range of military and industrial targets in Western Europe (one US projection from 1979 suggested that SS-20/Tu-22M deployments would give the Soviet Union 3250 INF weapons directed at Europe by 1985). To put a comparable range of Soviet targets at risk, the United States would be forced to raise the stakes and employ its strategic nuclear forces. Following the sharp increase in the numbers of accurate strategic nuclear warheads that flowed from the perfection of multiple

independently targetable re-entry vehicle technology in 1969–70, the United States had been engaged in developing a wider range of 'selective options' for the employment of its strategic forces. This was a response, in part, to European concerns that the US strategic nuclear forces were postured only for relatively massive responses that had credibility only in the context of a full-scale nuclear attack on the United States, and very little for 'lesser' contingencies like a Soviet attack against West Europe.

Even with these refinements to the US strategic nuclear posture, there was US/European agreement that the SS-20 created an unacceptable gap in the escalatory chain of nuclear threats—a flaw in the fabric of deterrence that it could not ignore. NATO had to be capable of putting at risk a comparable range of targets within the Soviet Union with (US) weapons deployed in Western Europe; that is, without requiring resort to US strategic forces. In November 1979, NATO resolved to deploy 572 new INF missile systems (108 *Pershing* II ballistic missiles with a range of 1800 kilometres and 464 ground-launched cruise missiles with a range in excess of 2000 kilometres, all with single warheads), beginning in 1983, and to invite the Soviet Union to negotiate limits on this category of weapons.

Taking the INF Treaty out of its context

Even this very sketchy account may seem an overly elaborate review of the INF issue. In the author's view, however, it is an indispensable prelude to evaluating the merits of the George W. Bush/Vladimir Putin proposal to globalise the INF treaty. That task requires identifying the incentives and pressures that combined to persuade the United States and the Soviet Union to enter into the Treaty in 1987, and then to consider whether and how incentives and pressures of comparable effectiveness could be brought to bear to attract the adherence of the large number of states that are, or expect to become, capable of possessing such weapons if the need arises and especially, of course, the relatively small number of states that currently seem to regard the acquisition of such weapons as a national priority.

This review of the circumstances that gave rise to the INF Treaty dramatises not only just how very special the circumstances were, but also just how thoroughly these circumstances have been swept away. The joint statement issued by Bush and Putin may have served, as its primary purpose, to reinforce the longstanding interest in slowing the proliferation of long-range missiles, perhaps as a precursor to some unilateral steps with respect to the INF Treaty. Opening the Treaty to all states could also be an interesting test to see which states hesitate, and why. Equally, however, such a move could backfire, with some states making their agreement conditional on the elimination of ICBMs and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). These states might even complicate matters further with the contention that requiring that the application of nuclear force be achieved through slow and uncertain means, namely aircraft, would have an important stabilising influence on the most dangerous nuclear relationships.

Absent a response along these lines, an endeavour to globalise the INF Treaty would, in the first instance, be pilloried as another have/have not security regime that reinforces and perpetuates the first one (the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)). Those states that, through a combination of geography and history, maintain a nuclear deterrent posture with ICBMs, would be permitted to retain them. New aspirants would be driven either to somehow leap over the medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) and intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) stage and directly develop an ICBM, or look to a submarine-based capability. Both

options hugely increase the technological challenge involved in 'joining the club' (which, of course, is why the proposal has its attractions). And the first option presumes that at least some part of their core strategic objective is more than 5500 kilometres away.

A walk through the global arena exposes the diversity of the lenses through which the proposal will be evaluated. Developing packages of incentives and pressures to generate an interest in embracing the globalisation proposal would be a formidable undertaking—something of the order of creating a harmonious world presided over by a bunch of great powers that used the nuclear-tipped ICBM to help preserve their own stability:

- Israel would be obliged to scrap its *Jericho* missile capability;
- Saudi Arabia would surrender its CSS-2s acquired from China;
- Iran would abandon its *Scud*-3 and *Shahab*-3 programs;
- Pakistan would scrap its *Shaheen* and *Ghauri* ballistic missiles (but it could retain any M-11 ballistic missiles it is thought to have acquired from China);
- India could retain the *Prithvi* missile but abandon the *Agni* ballistic and *BrahMos* (land attack cruise missile) programs;
- North Korea would lose its *No-Dong* and *Taepo-Dong* missiles;
- China would scrap a range of missile systems it developed over the years to put targets in the Soviet Union/Russia, India and Japan at risk (*Dongfeng* CSS-2,3, 5 and 6; and the *DongHai* DH-10 land-attack cruise missile); and
- Japan would be obliged to foreswear the option of matching the capabilities that North Korea and China currently direct against it.

If this is not already an overwhelming agenda of geostrategic manipulation, even benign Australia might hesitate. Australian defence policy has long attached importance to a capacity to disrupt a threat at some distance from the homeland. This capability has for more than 30 years resided in the F-111 medium bomber, but the submarine-launched land-attack cruise missile (LACM) has influential support as a follow-on capability.

The sentiment behind the proposal to globalise the INF Treaty is laudable. There can be no doubt that there has to be a special quality to the enmity between states that perceive the need to deliver awesome destructive capacity over the distances and especially with the detachment made possible by long-range missiles. And if this capability arises because of a prolonged state of enmity, it is probably also the case that acquiring the capability can generate such enmity. The political discrimination of a missile capability decreases as its range increases: some in Australia have already managed to imagine both a small number of North Korean ICBMs and one or more being targeted against their continent, planting the seed for an interest in national ballistic missile defences.

An Alternative Strategy

It should by now be clear that this observer would regard any major effort to implement the proposal to globalise the INF treaty as a misallocation of scarce political and diplomatic resources. The available alternative path to the same general objective, though also difficult and devoid of guarantees of success, does seem to have a measure of feasibility that the INF proposal lacks.

The view that the proliferation of long-range missile capabilities would be unhelpful to regional and international peace and stability has already found strong expression in the 1987 Missile Technology Control Regime and the 2002 Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. The further, and potentially more decisive, lever available to policymakers is the continuing strong correlation between long-range missiles and nuclear weapons. The former do not make sense without at least the promise of the latter (or their illegal biological and chemical siblings). Even the United States, with its unrivalled technological capacities and depth of resources, has only deployed one long-range missile system with conventional warheads—its family of air and sea-launched cruise missiles. To accomplish this, the United States has brought to bear at least the following singular capacities: intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets to identify targets with great precision; sophisticated inertial, terrain-matching, and global positioning system (GPS) guidance systems enhanced with terminal radar/television systems to deliver a cruise missile to that target with pin-point accuracy; and the resources to produce the weapon in sufficient numbers over two decades to capture the economies of scale but also to challenge manufacturers to reduce unit costs to a level commensurate with a one-off munition. Even then, the United States has unique roles and responsibilities in the world and has found the capacity to deliver a conventional warhead with great accuracy over long distances to be an invaluable tool to have in its political–military armoury—too valuable to scrutinise too closely in terms of any narrow assessment of cost-effectiveness. The possibility that intelligence might locate key terrorist operatives operating in remote and time-sensitive locations has even prompted interest in an ICBM with terminally-guided conventional munitions, a concept that also involves paying little regard to calculations of cost-effectiveness.

For practically all other countries, especially those as yet without the capacity to deploy long-range missiles, the costs of development and the unit costs of these one-off weapons are prohibitive except in the context of acquiring a decisive coercive and/or destructive capacity against a distant adversary. Strategic effects of this kind cannot be achieved with conventional warheads, not even the powerful conventional explosives that larger missiles could deliver.

If there is to be a major new political and diplomatic push in the arms control arena, such an effort should be directed at the nuclear non-proliferation regime; that is, at the warheads rather than the missile delivery systems. It is the bomb that generates interest in long-range missiles, not the other way around.

A legitimate response would be to argue that nuclear non-proliferation is and always has been, a priority concern and that everything possible is being done on that front, but that, despite this focus, we seem to be losing ground and that any determined and coherent opposition to proliferation on the part of the international community at large has become increasingly elusive. All of this is true. Developments with Iraq, North Korea, India, Pakistan

and Iran have generated a widespread impression that the non-proliferation regime has been seriously (perhaps terminally) weakened.

At the same time, it is possible to diagnose the prevailing malaise in the nuclear non-proliferation regime—the sense that the battle has been irretrievably lost—and to conclude that there is a way toward rebuilding a strong shared commitment to this objective, including the vigilance to identify errant behaviour early and the determination to correct it firmly that has been so conspicuously absent in the period since the Cold War.

The first observation is that nuclear weapons continue to arrest the attention of peoples and governments around the world. Familiarity has not bred contempt, and people/governments are prepared to be passionate and determined about 'the bomb' in a way that seems most unlikely in respect of long-range missiles. Secondly, we have known since the earliest days of the nuclear era that the scientific and engineering 'secrets' of 'the bomb' would seep out and that economic development would reduce the relative magnitude of the effort that states would have to mount to get them. A non-proliferation regime that encouraged abstinence but leaned heavily on denying access to the technology, materials and know-how made sense in the early decades. But the balance is now swinging the other way. As denial becomes increasingly ineffectual, progressively stronger reliance has to be placed on voluntary abstinence. North Korea's political, social and economic arrangements are scarcely typical, but it surely still supports the view that 'if they can do it, anybody can'.

Thirdly, as the non-proliferation balance was tilting away from denial toward abstinence, the very foundation of the regime—the view that everyone aspired to nuclear disarmament—was subject to significant erosion. Most notably, the Bush Administration took the United States down a path that struck at the heart of the political bargain underpinning the non-proliferation regime. The Administration:

- refused to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) on grounds that included the possible requirement for new weapon designs;

- abrogated the ABM Treaty—a treaty that attenuated the interplay of offensive and defensive capabilities in the strategic nuclear arena;

- consciously backtracked from positions that the Clinton Administration had endorsed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, including imposing an embargo on any official endorsement of the literal intent of Article VI of the NPT; and

- went to great lengths to portray the 2002 Moscow Treaty as the end of the road of US–Russian co-management of the primary nuclear balance, and that the target for US reductions (a force of over 4000 strategic warheads, about half of which would be operationally deployed) represented the rock-bottom US requirement for nuclear forces determined without reference to Russian capabilities.

The 11 September 2001 terrorist strikes on the United States led to a further intensification of this general message through the sharp elevation of pre-emptive and preventive war as options to either prevent state support for international terrorism or to preclude the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. The fervour of the neo-conservative views on how the United States should portray and discharge its obligation as the unipolar power, when fused with the shock, humiliation and rage caused by the terrorist attacks, engineered a marked change in the broad 'style' with which the United States approached the business

of being the world's pre-eminent state. Americans have since determined that the change has been a costly mistake, and they want their future leaders to ensure that this phase of US history is seen as an aberration. In short, the single most important actor in the non-proliferation arena is already changing course and is open to fresh ideas.[3]

The United States may not simply be walking away from a set of discredited policies. More may be afoot. Influential figures, figures seasoned by years of engagement in managing US foreign and security policies at the highest levels, have begun to question the unquestionable: that a powerful nuclear deterrent is indispensable to the protection and advancement of US interests even if this makes certain that others will retain their nuclear weapons and that still others will seek to acquire them.[4] The sources of this heresy appear to be twofold. First, the difficulty of managing regional and global security and protecting the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons, as deterrent postures try to cope with more independent nuclear weapon actors. Second, the new urgency that attaches to preventing terrorists—actors that may be essentially immune to deterrent disciplines—from acquiring nuclear weapons at any time from any source. No complex reasoning is required here. The greater the number of locations around the world where weapons or fissile material are stored, manufactured, repaired and deployed, the higher the probability that, someday, somewhere and somehow, the integrity of one of these locations will be compromised.

The first order of business is to restore credibility to the proposition that the nuclear weapon states are also genuinely committed to the objective of nuclear disarmament. Action on the CTBT, on Article VI of the NPT and perhaps on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty can begin this process. It is also clear, however, that advertising the scale of reductions in nuclear arsenals from the obscene levels attained during the Cold War is no longer particularly persuasive. Attention has reverted to the distance from zero. That is why the faint signals of preparedness to undertake a more far-reaching re-examination of where and how nuclear weapons 'fit in' could be so important. If we can begin to break down the correlation between nuclear arsenals and scenarios for their actual use, the scope for reductions and reconfigurations expands enormously.

It hardly needs to be said that this will be a difficult road for the nuclear weapon states to travel. A clear requirement is that every one of them, declared and undeclared, travel the road in concert. Equally, they will require the strongest possible confidence that the wider international community will join them in presenting a posture of zero tolerance regarding further horizontal proliferation. The observations above fall well short of a comprehensive strategy to revitalise the nuclear non-proliferation endeavour. Hopefully, however, they provide adequate support for the contention that focusing political and diplomatic resources on revitalising the nuclear non-proliferation regime is likely to be more effective in discouraging the acquisition of long-range missile systems than a direct assault in the form of a campaign to encourage universal adherence to the INF treaty.

Notes

1 To examine in detail the politics, personalities, strategy, and technology of the INF saga, see Strobe Talbott's *Deadly Gambits: the Reagan Administration and the Statements in Nuclear Arms Control*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984; and *The Master of the Game: Paul Nitze and the Nuclear Peace*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1988.

2 Conventional force postures in Europe had been under discussion since the mid-1970s in the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction negotiations, but NATO's insistence on, and Warsaw Pact resistance to,

asymmetric reductions resulted in a perpetual stalemate, until Mikhail Gorbachev conceded this basic principle.

3 Signals of change abound, including a preparedness to try different approaches in dealing with Iran and North Korea. Less visibly, the communiqué from the Australian–US Ministerial talks in February 2008 included the sentence: 'They reaffirm their commitment to the nuclear disarmament goals of the NPT.' In 2004, the then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, was prevented by the White House from expressing such a view to preparatory meetings for the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

4 See George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn, 'Toward a Nuclear-Free World', *Wall Street Journal*, 15 January 2008.