

The Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty—Implications For The International System

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The United States and the Soviet Union have finally been able to agree on what may be considered the first genuine disarmament treaty since the end of the Second World War. While much of the post-War international system over the last forty years had been dominated by the realities and rhetorics of the Cold War, this treaty has emerged as a small but symbolic effort, based on the cautious steps taken thus far in achieving arms control. Each step forward had involved risks of being nullified by bilateral postures of confrontation in response to shifting attitudes towards each other as well as unanticipated developments within the international system.

This paper is an effort to examine and analyse the likely consequences and circumstances in this unique treaty, both for the superpowers as well as the international system.

It is necessary to explain why this treaty is impor-

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tant to a student of international security. Arms control accords have been signed in the earlier decades as well, the most notable being the SALT One and Two, as well as conventions relating to chemical and biological warfare, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, much of which had opened the doors of superpowers reconciliation. But none of the earlier accords involved actual and substantive reductions of an existing nuclear weapons system indicating disarmament. None of the previous accords had signalled a deliberate option for what may be termed as an actual 'sacrifice' in the sense that a comparatively recent weapons-system meant to preserve the physical bastions of deterrence would be dismantled and destroyed. Weird as it may sound, this treaty does actually symbolise for the first time the birth of an element of trust in superpower's relations, amply typified by President Reagan's "courageous" effort to use a Russian proverb while addressing the audience at the White House signing ceremony: "Doveryai no proverpai" meaning "Trust but verify"¹—a situation that has actually been created after a gruelling application of a bargaining psychology between the two sides as they negotiated across the years.

Perhaps the worthwhile notable gain out of this treaty has been the birth of an element of continuity in the disarmament process, that may make it possible after this breakthrough to set into motion a specific pattern of a gradual and predictable, step by step arms elimination mechanism, more as a matter of routine rather than drama. Arms control accords of the earlier years had offered no meaningful clue to transfer disar-

ment from theory to practice and all that had happened were merely more exhibitionist than real, meant for political expedience that serve temporary interests of power. They had involved a marginal faith in breaking out of the communications barrier between the two superpowers. Similar agreements could have been signed long ago only to be proved deceptive in the long run. In this context, it may be meaningful to quote a few words from Ambassador Kenneth L. Adelman's address to the World Affairs Council in San Diego as early as August 30, 1984 while he had been serving as Director of the U. S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency : "In fact, one of the reasons we do not have an agreement is precisely because the President is serious about arms control. Let us not fool ourselves. Getting some kind of an agreement is not big problem. If the President told me to get any agreement quickly, we could bring one home on strategic nuclear arms, on intermediate nuclear arms and possible others. That could be done most easily by signing the Soviet proposals. But President Reagan wants a balanced agreement, not one slanted in favour of the Soviets. He wants an agreement with real bite, not a cosmetic one that may have some popular appeal but no real effect. So he has stuck by his principles in seeking an agreement that will truly enhance international stability, greatly reduce the number of nuclear warheads and be effectively verifiable. Sacrifice these principles and an agreement would come easily...."² Even several years ago, the question of nuclear disarmament was treated with considerable cynicism and

most of the emphasis seemed to be upon mutually verifiable arms control that would impose ceilings on number of warheads, cutting down only the extras than consider any substantive dismantling of existing weapons systems which would demand actual alterations in the perception of security itself. The latter is fortunately what seems to have occurred for the first time. The circumstances that contributed significantly to force through this perceptive change in formulating refreshing outcomes involve elements of coincidence between long drawn out negotiating strategies, compelling enough to lead to some form of a comprehensive set of results, very aptly signalled by the Reykjavil Summit between the two superpowers as a prelude to these accords, as well as the current availability of that particular climate within the international system where both the summitters find themselves to be capable of realising a position of approximate gain out of such an accord. But one should not be tempted to extend the possibility too much beyond a realistic point; it would in fact be clearly utopian to suggest for example that the logical extension of this disarmament process is an eventual target of a nuclear freeze, which would mean total dismantling of all nuclear weapons. Kenneth Adelman's words remain just as good in this context they were over three years ago, even though, the issue of verification, deemed impossible in earlier times, has been made a part of the INF Treaty. Adelman's observations on nuclear freeze were: 'While that idea enjoys a lot of public support generally, most of that support quickly turns to opposition if we cannot verify a freeze which

we cannot—or if it would be more advantageous to the Soviets—which it would. The freeze makes for a good bumper sticker but not for good arms control.³

This would not however mean that current notions of nuclear strategy based on deterrence would have to survive in the long run. It is because of assumptions regarding the supposed inevitability of its breakdown that the INF Treaty might help to recreate new and more predictable perspectives in order to replace the current realities of that strategy. As Fred Charles Ikle had observed almost three years ago: "Our thinking of nuclear strategy must reach far into the future. It is not enough that our strategy serves to prevent nuclear attack in this decade or the next. Nuclear armaments and defensive systems take ten years or more to design, develop and build; and once deployed they will last for a quarter century or more. We are today constrained in the choices for our nuclear policy by strategic theories that thirty years ago began to influence the development of our present weapons systems. The time to design for the twenty-first century is now."⁴ One can perhaps argue that in some form or other, the controversy over the INF system was rooted as early as the setting in of the debate following the employment of the doctrine of 'Flexible Response' as the tactical operational doctrine of deterrence, replacing the aging strategic doctrine of 'Massive Retaliation' during the early sixties. The notion of a limited nuclear war which happens to be the basic dividing line between the two powerful doctrines, had somehow always threatened the application of deterrence. Flexible Response

had outlasted Massive Retaliation in terms of validating the prospects of introducing newer categories of nuclear weapons systems. The doctrine has managed to survive through a continuous process of greater refinement and has rationalised itself since it had served well to conceptualize its utility due to the flexibility it promised in justifying each new weapons system. Tactical nuclear weapons have served as the means of allowing that flexibility of nuclear deterrence, while leaving a hypothetical probability to evolve that nuclear war can be winnable. The supporting strategic and tactical sub-doctrines have also introduced a whole baggage of micro-level calculations of nuclear weapons-use, based on numbers as well as destructive magnitude, and significantly enough, they forced an arrogant departure from the earlier abstract macro-perspective of a threat dominated structure that had offered the almost obvious certainty regarding the unusable character of nuclear weapons of the strategic type, since they would result in an immediate all out, total nuclear war. The INF Treaty for the first time has dealt with weapons that have so long remained well-entrenched by Flexible Response. In order to reduce the chances of a limited nuclear war, the INF Treaty seems to be the best beginning although it compromises the flexible response beliefs.

People like Henry Kissinger and Jeane Kirkpatrick, who have already expressed their reservations on the INF Treaty may also perhaps disagree with Fred Charles Ikle when he says : "We need to accomplish a long-term transformation of our nuclear strategy.

the armaments serving it and our arms control policy. To begin with, we must disenthral ourselves of the dogma of consensual, mutual vulnerability the notion that unrelieved vulnerability—the notion that unrelieved vulnerability of the US and Soviet Union to each other's nuclear forces is essential for halting the competition in offensive arms, and is the the best guarantee against the outbreak of nuclear war.”⁵ Although this would not imply a nuclear weapons-free world, it would certainly help to make the case for INF Treaty to be stronger. On the other hand, Henry Kissinger, in his recent response to the Treaty, remarks: “But I could not shake a melancholy feeling as I watched the leaders of the country whose nuclear guarantee had protected free peoples for forty years embrace Gorbachev's evocation of a nuclear-free world, a goal put forward, if with less panache, by every Soviet leader since Stalin. This most conservative of postwar presidents seemed bent on ending his term by dismantling the concepts and practices that have shaped western strategy for four decades... And the end of the arms control “process” being propagated so enthusiastically at the summit maybe to leave the United States with no meaningful nuclear option whatsoever.” Kissinger even goes on to express his given concern against the possibility of a forthcoming disarmament accord in mid-1988 that might cut down fifty percent of existing strategic weapons, terming it a “fateful step”. Typically enough, he chooses to rely entirely on the numbers perspective as his notion of security. As he says, “Numbers are boring but essential to

understand the danger. The dilemma will become even more unmanageable if the administration persists in proclaiming a nuclear-free world as its final goal. The endless reiteration that the INF agreement is historic because it abolishes two entire categories of nuclear weapons is likely to backfire". That he is no better than a cynic rather than a realist seems apparent when he suggests that the abolition of all nuclear weapons .. "is as unachievable as it is undesirable. So many nuclear weapons have been produced by the superpowers and their territories are so vast that the complete abolition of nuclear weapons would be utterly unverifiable. Each country would have to insist on retaining a number of weapons as a hedge against cheating and against the emergence of new nuclear powers. We would then be right back to all the existing dilemmas of nuclear deterrence, having in the process abandoned the conceptual underpinnings of the existing strategy."

Kissinger's psychological make-up appears to accommodate only a static mind and he seems to have just no faith in changes in human creative endeavours—the human priorities may be reshaped with changes in technological inputs, which have in fact substantially altered global communications, bringing human behaviour and their likes and dislikes much closer than ever before. A realist just cannot afford to be bogged down by stagnant notions of past behaviour—it would be unfair and unworth to refuse to recognise the current perceptions of Soviet proximity of interests vis-a vis the United States. The urge for expansionism

in a physical sense seems to be devoid of the meaningful content that it had in the past. It offers neither prestige nor wealth as the Soviets must have learnt thoroughly in Afghanistan. It is possible however that adversaries who have been competing for over four decades, when compelled finally to compromise on issues as sensitive as security, do become vulnerable to hard-headed criticism that might emphasise upon potential forms of future danger which remain conveniently ignored at a time of mutual compromise. And it is no wonder that Kissinger, who has been personally left out from being in the mainstredam of actors initiating such a breakthrough, might just try to take a little sweet revenge in an effort to uphold his own unique ivory-tower image, when he concludes that "The failure to test Gorbachev seriously may be the great missed opportunity of this summit. "And he adds" There is still time to restore a balance to the East-West dialogue. But first we first must recognise that Gorbachev cannot save the West. We must do that ourselves."⁸ Kissinger definitely undermines the capability and the hardened character of the conservative Reagan administration. Suddanly, he appears to be the man who is frustatingly escapist, an ultraconservative and a super-egoist when compared to the reality that he had himself been the very founding figure behind detente which infact changed the entire confrontational character of the Cold War and paved the way for what has been achieved today through the INF Treaty.

Kissinger's dilemma is also aptly worded by

Jeane Kirkpatrick, who, despite her long service to the Reagan Administration as its envoy to the United Nations, joins hands with Nixon-Kissinger when she says: "It is a step that Reagan-like his predecessors, badly wants to take. That, presumably, is the reason he has permitted arms control negotiations to become the focus of his foreign policy. Better than almost anyone, Nixon understands how this could happen. Nixon, after all, knows first hand how much more appealing it is to be admired as a peacemaker than reviled as a Cold Warrior. And what he knows worries him"⁹ It may just be possible to reverse Kirkpatrick's dilemma and suggest that Nixon-Kissinger are simply suffering from the old-fashioned problem that old men of action and pride have to reckon with when thrown out in the cold- some form of downright jealousy based on the reality that what they had themselves initiated through introducing the process of superpowers' detente and reaching a plateau in stabilising the cold war to tolerable limits, is just about being exploited fully by fellow-Republicans. The pains of realising that history might deny them a place of glory since there was no gesture of gratitude or even an acknowledgement of their own contributions as the founding fathers of superpowers reconciliation may have just worked in their subconscious minds and may have propelled them in the direction of cynicism.

Despite such interpretations that will certainly flow out in abundance in the near future, and would constitute ample virgin grounds for the specialists in strategic literature, the inevitable policy impact of the INF Treaty

is that it triggers off a whole new set of consequent follow-up actions that had simply been subjected to a forced procrastination as a result of excessive reliance on deterrence. It would mean an effort to cultivate a new psychological make-up and a partial plunge into a whole new set of policies that may involve a certain departure from long-held bureaucratic standard operating procedures in superpower relations. It might also lead to the elevation of a new set of decision makers and refined reformers within the realm of defense structures of both superpowers. This could mean that people who had reached the peak of their careers by using the inflexible notion of uncompromised confrontation as the only and obvious means of retaining military superiority as superpowers, would have to deal with a more complex set of variables in defining the exact ratio between unilateral defense build-up and bilateral steps to redefine a controlled status-quo vis a vis the other superpower. One of the foremost American Kremlinologists, Dimitri K. Simes, writes about the Soviet adjustments specially in foreign policy that may perhaps suggest a prior preparation in anticipation of the new dimensions of US Soviet relations. As Simes suggests: "Since Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party on March 11, 1985, the conduct of Soviet foreign policy has improved. A skillful public relations effort has become an important component of Moscow's diplomacy but the substance of USSR's international behaviour has also changed considerably. Gorbachev himself increasingly talks about the need for 'a new approach' in addressing the problems of the

world. . . . Rhetoric, of course, comes cheap. But the foreign policy changes under Gorbachev have gone beyond words. He reshuffled the national security leadership, bringing younger and less doctrinaire officials to key positions and giving himself more personal control over decision making. The new team quickly distinguished itself not only in launching Gorbachev's "charm offensive" but also by introducing a wide variety of foreign policy initiatives ranging from arms control proposals to overtures to China.¹⁰

Regarding the extent of peaceful intentions that Gorbachev attempts to project, Simes suggests: "The current Soviet domestic environment favors innovation in foreign policy as long as it does not abandon basic interests, ambitions and modes of behaviour. Gorbachev frequently argues that the Soviet preoccupation with the modernization of its economy and society assures the peaceful nature of the USSR'S global strategy. This is probably true to the extent that a period of international calm would help the Kremlin devote more resources to economic development. A new detente would also help Moscow obtain Western credits and technology."¹¹ On the other hand, Simes chooses to indicate caution as he also mentions: "But Soviet foreign policy is never dictated by economics. If anything, Gorbachev's difficulties in quickly improving the Soviet economy make it all the more important for him to demonstrate momentum in foreign policy. This momentum must be achieved without giving any impression of weakness or over eagerness. No conceivable economic benefits would be accepted by either the elite or the

majority of the Soviet people as adequate compensation for the abandonment of the much cherished dream of Soviet imperial greatness."¹²

It is difficult to believe however that the Soviets, after signing the INF treaty and being prepared to sign out a massive reduction of strategic weapons so soon, and having made really awesome sacrifices trying to acquire nuclear parity with the US in order to co-exist as equals, should now choose to revert to imperialist designs. Even if they seriously aspired for such goals, the politico-cultural context of the world at this time, quite well-entrenched into the idea of the approximate-state system and with the United Nations still functioning as a meeting point for checks and balances, an Afghan-style Soviet foreign policy behaviour seems impractical if not impossible in the future. Considering the extent of Gorbachev's control over the foreign policy apparatus, Dimitri Simes argues : "Western observers who speculate about hard-line challenges to Gorbachev too often uncritically project into the Kremlin's national security formulation the widely publicized bureaucratic procrastination, ineptness and corruption that frustrate economic reforms. But in foreign policy, the institutions are much smaller, the degree of centralization much greater and the general secretary's control over both decision-making and policy implementation much stronger"¹³

Gorbachev's sincere emphasis upon a greater degree of accountability, efficiency, and a certain form of openness within the system may help in changing values, preferences as well as related forces in order

to contribute to the process of neutralising mostly-older generation pressures in pursuing past-perceived policies of defensive-expansionism based on prestige-configurations. Turning to the INF Treaty itself, the substantive indication of an altered image of a redefined superpowers status-quo had been the breakthrough in what had until very recently remained an impossible mission to reckon with—the decision to actually allow verification of the signed accords through mutual consent, by conducting on-site physical inspections of arsenals sites of either sides, even on short notice if necessary. This has been a glorious first step in materializing future disarmament and a well-deserved outcome of long, painstaking negotiations across the years that allowed the eventual building-up for a degree of trust on each other's strengths and weaknesses, actual stakes involved as revealed by the bargaining strategies applied, and an inescapable conclusion that neither side had any unilateral access to a winning formula or a hidden ability to strike up any surprising betrayal of such well-entrenched structure of their military might. In other words, the element of trust has been based on a reciprocal parity of military strength, the Soviets having acquired a rough military parity vis-a-vis the United States around the early 1970s. Having, been forced to embrace the deterrence theory despite their ideological posture of rejection of what they considered the 'pseudo-scientific' character of this theory, they are consequently left with very little room to contemplate offensive military action with expansion in mind since deterrence through nuclear weapons simply cannot

allow them any opportunity to do so.

Mutually verifiable accords are essential for any lasting arms control or disarmament to materialise. Since verification proposals in the past were always prejudiced by excuses of infringement on sovereignty, what makes the difference now has been the unprecedented technological leap in the capacity to verify the fact that American commitment to space weapons and Soviet reciprocity to preserve their own, has opened up the scope for applying better verification technology as the best mechanism to implement the destruction of current stockpiles of long-accumulated nuclear weapons. These existing weapons do not eradicate the arms race in any meaningful sense, but they do help to open up a new structure of superpowers relations. This is partly because verification does impose an interesting set of essential preconditions. In the words of physicist Kosta Tsipis who directs the Science and Technology Program for International Security at the M. I. T., First, verification must enhance national security. We have to be able to tell whether the Soviet Union is doing anything forbidden by the terms of an arms control treaty that could damage us if undetected for any length of time. Second, verification must have a deterring effect: if the Soviet Union knows that cheating will be discovered, it won't attempt it. Third, verification should enhance stability, mutual trust, and confidence....If we are convinced that the USSR are abiding by the terms of the pact, we won't engage in the paranoia of 'worst case' analysis, whereby even the suspicion of a violation leads us to

declare bomber or missile "gaps" and begin expensive arms build-ups. Finally, verification must satisfy domestic political requirement. No US administration can hope for ratification of an arms control treaty by the senate, to say nothing of the acceptance by the public, unless it can convincingly show that it can monitor compliance."¹² The INF Treaty has been signed because these preconditions can now be effectively confronted. As Kosta Tsipis points out again: "By far the great share of the US intelligence budget, which is about \$ 15 billion dollars a year, now goes for what those in the business call non-intrusive technical means of information-gathering...These include giant hydrophones linked by cables on the ocean floor for monitoring the Soviet fleet of 375 submarines, reconnaissance satellites equipped with snarp-eyed cameras, radars on the perimeter of the Soviet Union looking out for missile launches, electronic intelligence, listening posts in Turkey, Pakistan and China, ships bristling with a variety of antenna, and large arrays of seismic detectors that pick up virtually every crack and groan of the earth, natural or man-made. Much of the information gathered by these electronic eyes and ears is screened, analyzed, and stored by computers that can process data at rates of billions of bits per second."¹³ Such a massive array of verification technology is not beyond the reach of the Soviets either and with this level of precautions which is bound to attain greater levels of perfection in future years, disarmament could emerge as a scientific means of preserving controlled global peace and security.

While the current research, testing and the eventual deployment of space weapons by the end of this decade would redirect the superpowers toward a renewed dependence on the doctrine of Massive Retaliation, the process that might as well open up following a gradual acceptance of the INF Treaty may help to redefine the parameters of a new macrolevel structure of confrontation. This may replace the rather aging micro-level, narrowly, focused arrangement in existence where every weapons-system has to be simultaneously matched by a counterpart in the name of closing the 'gaps' while all geographical regions, divided as defense zones or spheres, has to be subjected to a matching, reciprocal basis of confrontation by both sides. An eventual return to Massive Retaliation within the premises of deterrence might signify interesting implications for the international system. This could be symptomatic of the beginning of a new process of maturity or an important transitional point for the contemporary international system, that had faced the first stirrings of change with the impact of a sporadic, loosely-defined detente process in the early seventies.

The IMF Accords, on symbolic grounds, may prove to be the second most important turning point for the international system since detente. If this assumption appears too optimistic considering the conservative calculation of critical variables, the Treaty could yet mark the beginning of the second phase of the post-War international system, wherein power relations are redefined by an actually unprecedented extent

of risk reductions while preserving the basic precepts of a mutually agreeable status-quo, with both super-powers remaining the critical actors. The political will to allow verification opens the way for unprecedented levels of risk-reductions in the nuclear arms race context. Verification proposals in the early years had proven to be problematic for the USA because of her comparative technological superiority which compelled an emphasis on secrecy and security of new technology. In fact the Soviets have often been accused of trying to steal away super-sensitive American advanced technology. Thereby, such circumstances would make the idea of verification look like a deliberate exposure of the cautiously guarded US nuclear facilities to Soviet probing and spying in the name of some weird peace formula or international mechanism. American hardliners, notably the military establishment had obvious reasons to treat the verification proposals with a spirit of psychic repulsion that would fit naturally well with the built-in imperatives of security-conscious planners who instinctively smelt a conspiratorial camouflage in such do-goodism type of international endeavours. To be able to make a break-through in this particular area would almost require American as well as Soviet defense planners to compromise well-entrenched images of each other, something that still remains perhaps too difficult to ask for, since it would mean that the temporary role they had once played as Allies in fighting the Nazis in World War Two would now have to be relived and replayed under compulsion in a far different setting. Verification therefore

demands a compelling perceptual change, rather difficult to enforce psychologically ever when the action is underway with the accords signed. It would be painful to discover if both sides choose to eventually employ a process of converting the verification accords into a game of deceptions based on perhaps, unilateral legal interpretations of clauses, which, unless hopefully avoided, may then result in cancelling out the spirit and purpose of the Treaty itself.

The present status of the INF Treaty as a disarmament mechanism deserves a critical assessment in relation to the notions of nuclear force planning and arms control. While both of these latter terms imply approaches to security, force planning has involved a certain extent of inducement of unilateral restraint upon an adversary while arms control has involved offering negative incentives meant to gain, deny or preserve a rival's advantage through a process of tacit or negotiated cooperation rather than an adoption of unilateral alternatives. As William H. Kincade, a professor of National Security Studies at Georgetown University points out: "Force planning is a long-range enterprise and a continuing requirement. Given current technological lead times and similar factors, strategic planners must, in principle, seek to peer as much ten to twenty years into the future, assessing technology, forecasting adversary capability and developing responses. ... Arms control, on the other hand, is episodic, near term, and uncertain in its outcome, although it too, seeks to grapple with future contingencies. Even the limitations that can be achieved tacitly or explicitly

remain subject to reversal, as technological and political changes after the conditions that made restraint possible or advisable ... Despite forty years of Soviet-American nuclear negotiations, arms control has produced nothing like the reliable process that might allow it to become a regular influence on force planning. Although both Soviet and American officials from time to time have seen a utility in nuclear arms limitations and a positive linkage between it and more orderly nuclear force planning, neither Moscow nor Washington has proved sufficiently willing until now to go beyond an ad hoc approach to negotiated security."¹⁴ From Kincade's standpoint, it would appear that although the INF Treaty stands out as a more durable indicator to forestall the limitations of arms control as a means of restraint on nuclear force planning, it does not really offer a very great degree of qualitative realteration to the existing continuity of nuclear force planning. On the other hand, experiences of the American presidential politics on the question of nuclear deterrence may suggest an uneven fate for disarmament quests. In recent decades, American Presidents have often displayed remarkable shifts in emphasis on issues relating to arms control and disarmament.

The experiences of these last two decades suggest that a brief period of reconciliation along with a muted display of optimism between the two superpowers is often followed by a conservative backlash and consequent plunge into a more drastic commitment to superior military technology. In other words, sporadic superpower's breakthroughs had often done more to reaffirm

competitive confrontation rather than to encourage disincentives that would prevent decision-making elites from pursuing policies that provoke the 'peace through strength' psychology within an well-entrenched, conservative political culture. Most notable of such experiences had been the period of the Nixon-Ford era which, at the earlier stage, introduced a turning point in the Cold War through President Nixon's detente initiative. And yet, although the SALT ONE and TWO were duly signed as a consequent step indicating what appeared to be almost the demise of the Cold War and while President Carter even followed up with an attitude of unilateral restraint as exemplified by his suspending the B-1 Bomber production and the deployment of Cruise missiles, in practise however, detente had started to look like a policy of appeasement by the end of the Ford era and was interpreted that way. The latter attitude prevailed during much of the Carter period and finally revealed its actual form through whatever was symbolised by the election of Ronald Reagan as President. The adoption of Reagan's set of very expensive policies in support of an arms race with Moscow indicated closing 'the window of vulnerability.'

However, the fact that it is again President Reagan who has succeeded in implementing a parallel effort for what has proved to be a disarmament accord in a real sense, also tends to suggest an often paradoxical climax in the politics of today' media-focused world order. It may not be an exaggeration to suggest that only proven conservatives like Reagan, Nixon, or Begin of Israel, are the types who can expect to remain

believable to their own electorates and do emerge as eligible to survive politically on such issues following the conclusion of agreements with their adversaries relating to national security matters. While signing such international agreements, they have had better chances of getting away without much risk of being diminished by political opponents at home. Rather such personalities have left lasting imprints for history to record. Based on the current emphasis on nuclear force planning with the Strategic Defense Initiative as the central focus, an important question would be whether this particular INF Treaty will end up consequently with a plunge into deeper conservatism and an eventual return to the same old pattern of deep-seeded confrontational relationship, nurtured so far and so long with more assurance than any other choice.

It is possible to argue that the present state of the system is only a particular phase of the post-War international systemic structure and that events of the nature of detente or the INF Treaty are only temporary respites in what is otherwise a far more obvious means of system-preservation, that is, a militarily-competitive confrontation remaining as the crux for security and deterrence to continue to stay as the means for avoidance of any drastic destabilizing impact on what has been an exceptionally well-reckoned and stable structure. But a return to a conservative backlash at this point is perhaps less likely compared to any time in the past, and there is possibly some rationale for constructing a more optimistic vision of the near future. Several new variables would help

to distinguish the present prospects as slightly unique. The most useful of such variables that one must encounter before dismissing out the prospect of the INF Treaty is that this particular one has helped to redefine the validity of distinguishing arms control from disarmament in practise and reality. The clauses relating to verification, the commitment to dismantle an entire category of weapons systems rather than to impose ceilings on already over-produced weapons as was done in the past, are developments that are capable of creating perceptive changes to the extent of altering long-held values of chivalry based on weapons-focused security. Hardliners may find it far more impractical to apply the traditional tools of conservatism in order to break up the present conciliatory moves. Added to this, lies the fact that those who constitute the American decision-making elite on the INF Treaty do also have a rather well-defined past record that would effectively place them in the category of uncompromising proponents of nuclear weapons superiority.

A second compelling variable that helps to enhance the survivability of this particular Treaty to a unique extent is: the situational drive offered by a higher level of arms race, which means the fact that it occurs at the backdrop of an already prior commitment to what the critics of this accord are already married to-a far more unprecedented structure of a technologically unmatched defense-offense capability in the form of space-based weapons systems which is on the way of reaching deployable stage. The fact that there

has not been an overenthusiastic obsession to discontinue the space weapons investments despite its diabolical price-tag, does offer salutary benefits for hard-nosed realism in favour of the INF Treaty. It helps to offer a no-nonsense prospect for security-minded strategists in terms of mitigating any threat, of giving up the instinctive superiority they must retain as a last resort. as the space weapons programme is the means for a technological edge, which has so far assured the United States to gain from a deterrence-focused stability and survivability of the post-War international system. Based on this psychological make-up, the present reductions will actually amount to be a small percentage of the available nuclear arsenals, while a real gain from a disarmament point of view can be possible when the more sizable reductions occur in the near future with the signing of the planned treaty to dismantle the long-range strategic arsenals of both sides. Once the strategic nuclear missiles are eliminated by a substantive follow-up decision of the present INF Treaty, only then would the deeply-entrenched critics of arms reduction be expected to pounce effectively at such measures and be perhaps able to project their security-vacuum scenarios with a meaningful extent of concern. But even then, the fact that the space-weapons programme seems to be underway in such a blunt and uncompromising manner and is a serious endeavour for both superpowers, would serve very well to strengthen the arguable position of decision makers that such weapons of the future tend to convert the present, overproduced stockpiles into little

better than obsolete weapons which, in any case, are aging up and might as well be replaced with dignity and honour. It is possible to argue that the preservation of the policy to deploy weapons in space as the next phase of elevation of military technology has been a very realistic safety-valve in ensuring the acceptability of the current INF Treaty. There is an additional possibility that more creative breakthroughs in disarmament may be worked out if there is a gradual progress in expansion of mutual inter-dependence through greater economic interaction, trade and technology-cum manpower exchange. The potentials for scientific gains are so great that cooperation is likely to become a profitable investment in spite of apparent political misgivings that dominate decision-making on such areas at this time. That a stable, predictable and secure world order is a prerequisite to allow for substantive politico-economic gains by both superpowers is a way of thinking that they may be willing to consider in the foreseeable future if of course, the present trends tend to sustain. Even well-phrased words and the language of conciliation between their respective heads of governments during the much-publicized summits do help to smoothen bitter memories of past antagonism that had done little more than aggravate well-entrenched postures of rigidity. A growth of a process of awareness of each other's combined effort to face the challenge of building a new regime of superpower relations would mean the opening of new institutional structures within the existing international system which in turn would influence the sub-systemic levels since they are an integral, supportive

component of the values that determine the status and character of the system itself.

While a few of the geographical sub-systems are immersed in the deep-seated conflictual relationships that have their origins in the socio-cultural realities of the regions themselves, none can be compelled to significantly alter their perceptive security threat postures unless the essential inducements to do so are encouraged through concrete examples reflected at the top by the superpowers themselves. During the decade of the seventies, the formulation of the superpowers' detente had helped to introduce almost dramatic consequences for the actors operating as state-units at the sub-systemic level, who in turn chose to adopt reconciliatory gestures in formulating new negotiating strategies with literally uncompromising adversaries. Detente had created a new structure of values on the question of prestige configuration while it introduced the means for negotiating the norms of a minimum working relationship between or among smaller sub-systemic actors in their relationships with both local or regional rivals as well as extra-regional foes, whose attitudes were guided by systemic values. The best examples of such behaviour are the Simla Accords after the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel, the reconciliatory process between Communist China and the ASEAN states, between Japan and China, and to a certain extent, even between Vietnam and the ASEAN member-states. These systemic developments emerged as unique departures from past-patterned behaviour. A lot of the impact

that they may have had in contributing to the painfully patient tasks of restructuring the altered premises of confrontation, despite the threats of overwhelming rejection from powerful quarters in support of the earlier postures of unalterable confrontation, was in fact, a direct result of the detente process between the two superpowers.

But then as the term detente faded away into disrepute within the American domestic political context following Nixon's Watergate scandal, and had affected superpowers' reconciliation at that stage, its initial force had a from of a creative melodramatic power of its own, which had allowed for detente to implant lingering imprints of reconciliation. Even if the process suffered, the threads were to be picked up where they had fallen off. Arms control agreements of the detente period paved the way for deeper insights into the real hurdles of disarmament and while such hurdles had appeared unsurpassable until the very recent past, the INF Treaty has finally served to prove that all was not lost since the demise of detente in superpowers relation. The international system is now beset with a horizontal proliferation of ideas which may hopefully escalate at the sub-systemic levels and may thus allow smaller actors to approach foreign policy objectives that would lead to a reduction in the militarization-emphasis in their relations with each other. Without trying to exaggerate optimistic scenarios, one may hope that the INF Treaty may inspire a better level of regional cooperation in the shape of perhaps, a pan-European identity for both

East and Western Europe, a much more realistic and applicable basis for pan-Arab unity based on a durable grasp of reconciliatory approaches vis a vis Jewish Israel and fundamentalist Iran, not through any direct link of the issues involved since there are actually none in a formidable sense, but rather as part of a new systemic structural breakthrough with new values introduced. Existing regional organisations would thereby strive to gain a greater level of crisis-management ability by opening up hitherto forbidden channels of sensitive communications, which could include for example an acceptable mechanism for reconciliation between Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia on the one hand, and the ASEAN member states on the other; taking up of politico-military bilateral issues of South Asian states in SAARC forums, greater adjustment between the two divided Koreas, and a more cooperative process that might emphasise upon the themes of a similar nationhood shared by East and West Germany. Even the current level of optimism in Sino-Indian and the Sino-Soviet dialogue could perhaps attain a greater level of progress in terms of concrete decision-making if perhaps definite agreements are worked out to resolve their territorial disputes to the extent that they may eventually cease to confront themselves through images of pride and prestige stereotypes built over the last few decades. The process of reconciliation on these issues have already gotten underway but the essential level of maturity that demands an enlightened vision for compromise remains obscured by systemic constraint that particular dividing line which reinforces rigidity

and which, only the superpowers, through their own acts of reconciliation, are capable of defreezing in the form of a sub-systemic flexibility among the less super actors.

In other words, within the international system, the superpowers are considered most eligible to determine the standards as reconciliatory negotiating strategy maybe because their levels of confrontation appear to be so deeply entrenched and are so comprehensive in substance. They have lived with extreme positions on the application of the intellect for what currently appears to be trends in favour of flexible ideological postures but nonetheless, the rigidity of earlier postures still remains overwhelming enough to delay, the opening up of common policies on new areas of common threat, such as, the rising fundamentalist upsurge of the Islamic creed, the growth of terroristic radicalism, as well as growing Third World demands to free their own regions from superpowers' involvements.

Finally, the INF Treaty is important for the purposes or relating to another hitherto impenetrable as well as irreconcilable area of international security-the problem of nuclear proliferation. Although the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty continues to survive partially in practise and theory, the Treaty remains far from equal and is infact considered to be a machinery for exploiting states that had not been as fortunate as the six permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The NPT is often condemned as an unfair prior arrangement to deprive other aspirants who wish to climb up and acquire a better share of the global status quo. The

NPT supposedly imposes a rigid post-War power structure based on notions that left no room to rewrite its clauses in response to possible changes in nuclear capability or in view of the need to accommodate new or peripheral nuclear weapons-capable states. Non-signatories to the NPT, including both India and Pakistan have constantly pointed out the irrelevance of its discriminatory clauses that were bound to make it increasingly obsolete over time. The NPT nonetheless has maintained an approximate level of success in legitimising a system that has procrastinated proliferation of nuclear weapons-capable states. It operated almost forcefully for over two decades until a few of the nuclear-peripheral states led by India have effectively exposed its weaknesses that reveals Western obsession with preconceived, prearranged formulation of the power structure. The basic rationalization against the NPT remains that if the nuclear club was not to expand, than it has to be dismantled rather than be subjected to a restricted membership.

The INF Treaty seems to offer some consolation to the NPT opponents since the Treaty marks the genuine beginning of the dismantling process. Nonetheless, the fact that there is a next generation of sophisticated weapons system awaiting deployment in outer space, meant to totally recreate the concept of warfare, does indicate that a mixture of optimism, deception and ambition would dominate the nuclear nonproliferation scenario, so that the INF Treaty would perhaps maintain itself to serve as a faint glimmer of muted hope for nonproliferation. On the other hand, there may be

greater pressure in favour of revising the present format of the NPT and to make it more realistic and flexible to meet the changing needs of the global military equilibrium. The present trends of increasing transfer of technology from the West to the East Bloc states as well as the Third World, gradual strides at using improved media technology that intrudes past the restrictions imposed on human contact between the two superpowers, and an appreciable extent of inclination to accommodate the perceptions of a common global culture through the shared views of a world-wide media-focused cultural transition as well as the willingness to combat the common threats to entire mankind, do help to create some form of unprecedented evidence that a new set of values are emerging that would make confrontational politics an unprofitable investment in the long run.

However, the future of the INF Treaty will remain tied to the next phase of disarmament which is planned to materialise after the signing of the strategic arms reduction accords around the middle of 1988. Long range strategic missiles have been the very bastion of deterrence since they offer the most diabolical image of destruction that the world had to painfully live through for the last four decades. The pattern of continuity that has been set into motion demands even greater penetration into other areas of nuclear deterrence as well as conventional capability. They should include the flexible military options offered by air and sea power, which are even more dangerous since they may operate from the international airspace and the interna-

tional waters where none has any exclusive claim and yet, whose possible proximity to landmasses may endanger the lives of innocent millions who may have no stakes involved at all. For military planners, the INF Treaty has been an effective pre-emptive strategy in order to revitalise their dedication to better forms of military technology upgrading process. From their point of view, it would be realistic to suggest that there will be serious, committed and even discrete efforts to materialise the space defense technology during the coming decade which, in their terms would mean a sober move to bring back human behaviour within the predictable fords of past patterned behaviour, somewhat safer in their context but not as short-sighted or confrontation-biased as it has been during the last four decades.

The safety of patterned behaviour would involve perhaps, alongwith the elevation of military technology, a parallel level of greater technology-interdependence in non-military sectors, for which, the groundwork has already been completed and is amply evident through the present symptoms that suggest improved relations at the Sino-American, Euro-Soviet, Euro-Chinese and finally, at the superpowers' levels. There is some hope that the incentives of technology would eventually help to dilute the ideological barriers to a tolerable extent, if of course, the former proves to be meaningful enough to mellow down the curse of modern times that still remains-scarcity of essential resources and the need for greater redistributive justice.

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