

PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

This is the second volume of a two volume monograph on Europe and the SALT Process. The first volume entitled '*Equal Security. Europe and the SALT Process, 1969–1976*' published in 2013 dealt with the European response to the SALT process during the Nixon-Ford Administration, 1969–1976. This volume focuses on the SALT process in the era Carter. The Carter era witnessed a stronger penetration of the US arms control decision-making process. NATO Allies started to co-shape US arms control and successfully broadened the traditional bilateral SALT process. The Intermediate Nuclear Force negotiations were the result. This volume ends with the resignation of the first Secretary of State in the Reagan Administration: Alexander Haig. Haig's resignation marks the end of the traditional SALT process. After his resignation the Reagan Administration finally broke with the Carter inheritance. The new start had major repercussions for NATO Europe's participation in strategic arms control. The Reagan Administration commenced to limit the influence of NATO Europe on arms control to the Intermediate Nuclear Force negotiations. The new credo was that NATO Allies should not dictate US arms control policy. The years 1977 to 1982 thus witnessed first an expansion of Western decision-making that was later rolled-back in order to gradually revive superpower control over arms control matters. Control was re-established during the second Reagan Administration.

This volume as the previous volume uncovers the inner working of Western decision-making on arms control. Both volumes do analyze the impact of strategic arms control on the 'Western' defense structures and European defense interests. Both volumes interpret arms control as a national defense policy controlled by the National Security Advisor and administered by the NSC Council Staff in conjunction with the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the State Department. Strategic arms control must be distinguished from disarmament. Arms control is a rational and interest driven strategy in national defense policy to assure strategic stability and crisis stability by way of a codification and limitation of the arms race. The final aim is the establishment of a strategic balance among peer contenders – i.e. parity in counter-force capability or 'hard kill capability' and not in numbers of delivery systems. 'Kill capability' integrates yield, throw weight, numbers and accuracy of strategic weapons systems. The aim of administered 'mutually assured destruction' is strategic stability. 'Equal security' or 'mutual strategic security' (MSS) can be obtained at different levels of armaments. In arms control the level of armaments is not to be prioritized but the balance of power and thus the relative invulnerability of the contenders. Lower levels of armaments are not automatically enhancing 'mutual strategic security'. Lower levels could even be destabilizing if offsetting balances are destroyed. Thus the core task of arms control is to assure that none of the parties will obtain at any given moment in an arms control process a major

strategic advantage over a peer competitor. Vulnerabilities undermine crisis stability.¹ Thus quantitative and qualitative imbalances have to be tackled in common in order to forestall destabilizing technological advantages. The latter might tempt the less advanced party to pre-emptive actions or the more advanced party to the utilization of a ‘window of opportunity’ to strike first. Numerical parity is not necessary – but offsetting balances that assure a balance of power. Furthermore, transparency has to be assured in order to forestall cheating and surprise attacks. In short, arms control is the management of the strategic relationship to assure ‘mutual strategic security’. A strategic balance, however, can also be obtained without arms control just by unilateral timely adjustments to changes in the strategic environment. Thus defense advocates sometimes prefer the flexibility of traditional defense policies to slow moving and complex arms control regimes. Arms control, however, creates predictability and eases defense planning and military procurement.

Arms control and defense planning have to be strictly coordinated to obtain optimal outcomes. Doctrinal inclination to arms control or legal regimes have to be subordinated to the national security interest. The national security interest demands strict reciprocity. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter’s National Security Advisor, totally concurred with the general arms control approach of his predecessors Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft. Brzezinski highlights that the arms control process has to be protected from domestic arms control lobbies who elevate ‘these negotiations almost to a fetish’ in order to eliminate the nightmare of human destruction created by the ‘appearance of nuclear weapons.’² For Brzezinski the ‘contamination of strategy by pacifism’³ undermines survival in the nuclear age. Demands for unilateral steps of disarmament, for the ‘no first use’ of nuclear weapons or a ‘nuclear freeze’ at a time of strategic imbalance can and will create or preserve asymmetries among the peer competitors that invite conflict instead of eliminating conflict. Unilateral steps in arms control always have to be related to strategic stability and not to a doctrinal disarmament agenda. Arms control thus is a branch of national defense policy.

The Carter Administration embraced the challenge to lower the level of armaments by way of arms control. While the Nixon-Ford Administration had worked towards a stabilization of the arms race to establish a platform for a general nuclear disarmament as envisaged in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Carter Administration sought to carefully reduce the level of nuclear delivery vehicles without threatening the nuclear balance, US national security or Alliance relations. The Vladivostok Accord of 1974 had established a common ceiling of nuclear delivery systems. President Carter sought to lower the aggregate total of the Vladivostok Agreement worked out by the Ford Administration. Carter envisaged embarking on a general reduction of the nuclear arsenal without

1 David S. Yost, *European Security and the SALT Process* Washington: Sage 1981, 11.

2 Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Game Plan. A Geostrategic Framework for the Conduct of the US-Soviet Contest* Boston/New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press 1986, 149.

3 Ibid, 148.

undermining crisis and strategic stability and the relative position of the two superpowers during this process. President Carter, furthermore, sought to take another qualitative step. The SALT approach of the new Administration embraced quantitative *and* qualitative arms control for the first time. Real arms control was the aim – ‘mutual predictability and stability’ at lower costs. Strategic parity surely remained the guiding principle. The Carter Administration sought to lay the foundation for a future ‘global zero’ agenda in line with an overall strategic nuclear, tactical nuclear and conventional balance. A new nuclear and world order was dawning based on SALT, a reform of the NPT regime, a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), A Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR), a denuclearization of the Indian Ocean and a control of conventional weapons transfers globally.

Brzezinski’s seminal study ‘*Game Plan – A Geostrategic Framework for the Conduct of US-SU Contest*’ stresses a second facet of strategic arms control. Arms control cannot be isolated from geopolitics.⁴ Arms control regimes are the bone structure of any given world order. The distribution of power in the international system can be frozen or altered by way of arms control regimes. Access to or denial of nuclear weapons and its delivery systems decides the relative position of any player in the international system. Geographic factors feature whenever weapons systems are debated. Weapon ranges structure the strategic map. Thus arms control has always a geopolitical component. The codification of bipolarity through the emerging East-West strategic arms control regime threatened to replace the bloc architecture based on Alliance systems. A form of ‘condominium’ of the superpowers emerged that relegated conflicts to controllable geographically limited wars. The superpower parity created sanctuaries for the superpowers. Thus the Western Alliance system was disaggregated into two distinct strategic theatres. As a consequence a decoupling of Western-European and American security was threatening with wide-ranging politico-military and geopolitical consequences. European security was compromised by superpower *détente* and a strategic arms control agenda that prioritized the national security interests of the superpowers. The US Allies considered the development of indigenous European defense structures in case a re-coupling of transatlantic security was unobtainable.⁵

This volume – as the previous one – scrutinizes the interdependence of Western defense and arms control. This volume analyzes the European contribution to the SALT process during the SALT II and the so-called SALT III process. The Reagan Administration introduced the terms Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) to underline the break with the Ford-Carter approach to strategic arms control. The Carter Administration’s arms control policy is here under scrutiny. President Carter faced an upheaval within the NATO Alliance that led to co-decision-making on an unprecedented scale. A roll-back of European influence started with the Reagan Administration. The final chapter on the Reagan Administration was mainly included to underline the contours of the Carter approach to

4 Ibid, 153.

5 Yost, 17.

strategic arms control and to highlight alterations in the relationship with both the SU and NATO Allies. The previous volume established the historical background. The volume 'Equal Security' outlined Henry Kissinger's firm control over the strategic arms control process, the back channel negotiations between the President's National Security Advisor Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and the 'shuttle diplomacy' that provided the necessary strategic guidance for the SALT delegations. The SALT delegations were tasked to work out definitions, technical details and the legal aspects of the arms control proposals that were sketched by the principals. The first volume also captured the intra-Alliance consultation mechanism that had assured NATO Europe a voice opportunity in the SALT process. During the Nixon-Ford Administration Henry Kissinger himself briefed NATO Allies frequently. The Head of the US SALT delegation or key members of the NSC SALT staff briefed on a regular and institutionalized basis NATO Allies about the latest developments in Geneva. The NATO structures offered multiple *fora* to harmonize US and NATO Europe's interests: (1) the North Atlantic Council (NAC), (2) the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG); (3) the Defense Planning Committee (DPC). The core forum was the North Atlantic Council on the basis of the Permanent Representatives. SALT expert meetings complemented frequently the briefings in the NAC. The multilateral layer was complemented by a network of institutionalized bilateral consultation mechanisms on SALT. The Anglo-American SALT negotiations conducted in Washington D.C. were of prime importance to align the nuclear special relationship to the SALT process. Less formalized diplomatic channels were utilized to brief the West-German, French and Italian governments or other NATO Allies. The West-European members of NATO had established their own forum the 'Petrignani Group' to concert actions and to enhance NATO Europe's role in arms control. The 'Petrignani Group' of European SALT experts frequently had gathered in conjunction with NAC briefings to discuss European interests and to enhance NATO Europe's voice opportunity in the NAC. France was not partaking in the 'Petrignani Group' due to its NATO label. Anglo-French, French-German or Anglo-German politico-military talks complemented the European cooperation on strategic arms control.

The concerted actions assured NATO Europe an ever growing influence on the formulation of the SALT positions during the early SALT II process. Allied influence was often indirect. The NATO Allies used military to military contacts or forged alliances with Congressional leaders to penetrate US decision-making. The Europeans were in particular concerned about a SALT non-transfer clause. SALT was not allowed to undermine future NATO defense options. A non-circumvention clause could potentially prohibit not only weapon transfers but the transfer of components, blueprints and technical information and thus undermine the future of the Anglo-American nuclear special relationship or of the NATO dual-key arrangements. Other SALT aspects were of vital importance for NATO Europe. The penetration capability of the British and French deterrent forces had to be preserved. The SALT I ABM level regulation forestalled a costly modernization of the British and French strategic forces. The history of SALT furthermore

reveals that NATO Europe categorically rejected that ‘forward-based systems’ (FBS) counted against the SALT aggregate total. FBS are US European-based nuclear non-central systems capable of striking the Soviet Union. FBS were part of the SALT endeavor since any system capable of striking the opposite party’s territory was deemed ‘strategic’ under SALT. The strategic arms limitation talks covered both home based central systems of intercontinental range and US forward based systems. No Soviet forward-based systems existed after the failed forward basing attempt in Cuba in 1962. The Soviet Union thus demanded an end to forward basing or an inclusion of US FBS in the SALT aggregate total to assure a balance of US and Soviet systems.⁶ Regulations of central systems were deemed inadequate since they were in the last resort freezing an existing asymmetry that favored the ‘West’. The one-sided FBS allowance for the ‘West’ threatened to undermine the principle of ‘equal security’, parity and crisis stability. NATO Europe totally rejected a FBS regulation. The US FBS were the primary weapon system of the ‘West’ to counter the euro-strategic or sub-strategic Soviet SS-4 and SS-5 IRBM – in case British and French systems were not taken into the equation. The FBS were of importance to preserve a Euro-strategic balance. A Euro-strategic balance, however, was beyond the scope of the bilateral US-USSR SALT process. The problem had remained unresolved during the Nixon-Ford Administration. Prior to the Vladivostok Agreement NATO Europe had constantly rejected the option to expand the SALT process to all non-strategic nuclear weapons. NATO Europe deemed the US FBS and the ‘third party’ systems of France and the United Kingdom superior to the old Soviet IRBM. A widening of the SALT process to include all ‘gray area systems’ was considered unfavorable for the Euro-strategic balance. Matters changed with the Vladivostok Accord of 1974. At Vladivostok the Soviet Union withdrew its demand to include FBS in the aggregate total. The FBS issue was removed from the SALT II agenda and earmarked for the SALT III process. SALT III would deal with reductions and non-strategic systems. Reductions raised the strategic importance of FBS. Thus reductions and non-central systems regulations were interdependent. Since FBS remained unregulated the Soviet Union commenced to replace the aging SS-4 and SS-5 IRBM with the more modern system SS-20 to counter both FBS and ‘third party’ systems.⁷ The Soviet modernization decision had been taken by the Soviet Union to enhance Soviet negotiation currency in order to finally ‘force US FBS onto the negotiating agenda at SALT III.’⁸ The SS-20 provided Moscow with an ideal bargaining chip. As a consequence of the Soviet IRBM modernization the Euro-strategic balance shifted gradually in favor of the Soviet Union. Thus NATO Europe’s view on the Euro-strategic balance altered. The existing FBS were

6 John Borawski, ‘Theatre Nuclear Arms Control and Forward Based Systems, Air University Review’, May/June 1982, <http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1982/may-june/borawski.html> (access date: 1 September 2012).

7 Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Policies of Nuclear Weapons in Europe, 1969–1987. The Problem of the SS-20*, Basingstoke: Macmillan 1989, 58ff.

8 Ibid, 59.

deemed inadequate. The option to deploy cruise missile (CM) systems in Europe to counter the MIRVed and mobile SS-20 IRBM and the new Soviet Backfire bomber gained strategic importance.⁹ Helmut Schmidt's interest to widen the SALT II process to cover the SS-20 and Backfire bomber or the entire 'gray area' gradually emerged after the Vladivostok agreement.

The scope question once settled at the outset of the SALT process re-emerged due to the development of Cruise Missiles. Regulated so far were only ballistic missile systems of intercontinental ranges. Cruise Missiles had been developed under Nixon's Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird as a US bargaining chip to enhance US negotiation strength.¹⁰ The Vladivostok Accord was silent on CM. But an interpretative war emerged about the Vladivostok *Aide Memoire* and the interpretation of the term 'air-to-surface missile'.¹¹ The US interpreted the term restrictively. Missile stood for ballistic missiles. The Soviet Union interpreted the term to cover both ballistic and cruise missiles. By the end of 1974 both sides had grasped the potential of the new CM system. The SU sought a CM regulation or prohibition. The US and NATO Europe objected to a SALT regulation of the weapon system due to its Euro-strategic importance. The SU was alarmed. In case the CM weapons system was not limited in SALT up to 10 000 ALCM warheads might emerge given the bomber allowance of Vladivostok. This would totally invalidate the central systems regulation.¹² The whole SALT accord could be strategically circumvented. The Soviet leadership thus urged the US not to allow a circumvention of the central systems accord. It would not make sense to build a dam against ballistic missiles while cruise missiles would remain unregulated. Henry Kissinger deemed it advantageous to limit the CM and to complete a SALT II agreement during the term of the Ford Administration. The Soviet Union would acquire a CM capability in the future, as it had acquired a MIRV capability or an ABM capability.¹³ An early regulation thus was sensible. NATO Europe remained hesitant. Well, NATO Europe objected totally to an inclusion of the CM into the SALT process. The CM was a promising tactical weapon for nuclear and conventional strike options. Thus in 1975 and 1976 a co-operation between Jackson Democrats, Reagan Republicans, the Pentagon and NATO Europe emerged that defended NATO's future defense options. A clear Western concept was becoming discernible. Parity of numbers in central systems of the superpowers assured 'Western' superiority in case NATO defense options and 'third party' systems remained unregulated. This coalition of 'falcons' – who started to reject the arms

9 Ron Huisken, *The Cruise Missile and Arms Control*, Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Center 1980, 8; see also: Richard Burt, 'The Cruise Missile and Arms Control', *Survival* 18,1 (1976), 10–17.

10 Ibid, 3

11 Zbigniew Brzezinski, SALT Negotiating History, Document IV 20–27, Carter-Brezhnev Project, National Security Archive; George Washington University, Washington DC, www.nsarchive.gwu.edu/carterbrezhnev/ (last access: 8 Sep 2015).

12 Ibid, 11.

13 Ralph L. Dietl, *Equal Security. Europe and the SALT Process, 1969–1976*, Stuttgart: Steiner 2013, Chapter 10 and 12.

control principle of ‘sufficiency’ of the Nixon-Ford Administration – blocked a quick conclusion of SALT II in 1976. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who had served as NATO Ambassador, totally sided with NATO Europe. Rumsfeld clearly stated in his memoirs that he was ‘certainly comfortable with delaying a new treaty’ for as long as ‘a satisfactory resolution’ of points of concern ‘were not reached.’¹⁴ Rumsfeld acted accordingly. The SALT process froze. Kissinger blamed the Joint-Chiefs-of Staff (JCS) for ‘intransigence.’ Rumsfeld memoirs seek to correct this impression: The JCS ‘were not the impediment, I told him – I was.’¹⁵ President Ford concurred. He placed ‘responsibility for the failure to get a SALT agreement’ on Rumsfeld and the SU.¹⁶ The coalition that opposed a Vladivostok type SALT II agreement was surely wider. The Pentagon, the JCS, NATO and the US Congress blocked progress. The Soviet Union joined the opposing block – since it started to fear that a SALT II Agreement signed by the Ford Administration would not be ratified by the US Congress – prior to the Presidential elections. The Kremlin feared that an incoming US administration would not honor a SALT II agreement. SALT II, a Ford inheritance, thus would be defeated by the future US Congress. The Ford Administration furthermore sought to disaggregate the SALT agreement into a central systems agreement and a separate cruise missile regulation. This raised the problem that only one of the two interdependent agreements might be ratified prior to an election. Thus delay was the best option.

The incoming Carter Administration – elected into office in November 1976 – faced a transatlantic conflict in case NATO’s interests would not be taken into the equation. The European CM option had to be preserved or SALT might get targeted by NATO Europe. Under these circumstances it was to be expected that the incoming Carter Administration would heed the advice of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General George S. Brown and of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. General Brown had advised Rumsfeld on 1 December 1976 that the US offset the upcoming deployment of a new generation of Soviet ICBM, SLBM, IRBM and of the Backfire bomber by a SALT approach that does not constrain the US technological advantage in the field of cruise missiles. The Chiefs of Staff recommended that ‘the US negotiating slate be wiped clean. The US proposal should not offer significant cruise missile concessions unless Backfire is included in the aggregate.’¹⁷ In brief the Joint Chiefs advised to disregard aspects of the Joint Draft Text (JDT) on SALT. In other words the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered it best to eliminate the entire SALT negotiation record on CM limitations and the Backfire bomber. The incoming Carter Administration had to utilize the Vladivostok Agreement as its platform – in its original US interpretation.

14 Donald Rumsfeld, *Know and Unknown. A Memoir*, New York: Sentinel 2011, 239.

15 Ibid, 231.

16 Ibid, 232.

17 Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, 1 December 1976, FRUS 1972–1980, XXXIII: SALT II, No. 145.

The Carter Administration faced a major problem from the outset. The Soviet Union was to insist on the negotiation record since Vladivostok. The Joint Draft Text not the Vladivostok Accord had to guide the future SALT negotiations. The difference was of importance for the Alliance. The incoming Carter Administration had thus to make one major key decision, namely to either prioritize superpower *détente* and strategic arms control or trans-Atlantic relations. At stake was the future of the 'West'. A prioritization of superpower *détente* could have negative repercussions on transatlantic relations. A prioritization of Alliance affairs was to revive 'Western' solidarity but could potentially destroy superpower *détente* and revive a bloc competition.¹⁸ A revival of the early Cold War competition would be the consequence.

18 William G. Hyland, 'The Struggle for Europe: An American View', in: Andrew Pierre (ed), *Nuclear Weapons in Europe*, New York: A Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1984, 15–44, *ibid.* 15.