Did "Peace Through Strength" End the Cold War?

Thomas Risse-Kappen

Lessons from INF

Now that the Cold War seems to be over, with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the transition of the Central Eastern European countries toward democracies and market economies, two important debates are taking place among scholars, policymakers, and the public at large. The first concerns the future of European security and the question of whether the post-Cold War world will be safer or a more dangerous place. The second debate focuses on the reasons for the recent changes. An emerging conventional wisdom seems to hold that the end of the Cold War represents a victory for Western strategies of "peace through strength" or at least "containment." Standing tough against the Soviets seems to have paid off, leading to a complete turnaround in Soviet foreign policy, revolutionary arms reduction treaties, and the collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe. Therefore, the lesson to be learned, in this view, is that resolve and "bargaining from strength," rather than strategies of reassurance, are likely to produce cooperative outcomes, particular in times of increasing uncertainty about the future of the Soviet Union.


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2. What made the start of [arms reductions possible was the willingness of the democracies to maintain an adequate deterrence posture. This would sustain the process of reductions: the willingness to endure that at every level of reductions, deterrence is maintained and preferably strengthened." Valdery Giscard d'Estaing, Yasuhito Nakasone, and Henry A. Kissinger, "East-West Relations," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Summer 1989), pp. 7-38. See also Robert J. Einhorn, Negotiating from Strength: Leverage in U.S.-Soviet Arms Control Negotiations (Praeger, 1989); John Lewis Gaddis, "Hanging Tough: Paul Wolfowitz," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Vol. 45, No. 1 (January 1989), pp. 11-14; and Richard Pipes, "Can the Soviet Union Reform?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 1984), pp. 47-61.


The INF treaty was only achievable after the leadership change in the Union. This means, first, that reference to bargaining strategies alone accounted for the final outcome. Second, I will argue that crucial events...
From "Dual Track" to "Double Zero:" A Chronology of the INF Treaty

Early 1970s
NATO's Nuclear Planning Group starts evaluating U.S. short- and medium-range nuclear arsenals in Europe.

April 1975
U.S. Secretary of Defense demands modernization of U.S. nuclear forces deployed in Europe.

Early 1977
USSR begins deploying a new medium-range missile with three warheads, the SS-20.

October 11-12, 1977
NATO appoints a High Level Group (HLG) to advise on modernization of U.S. INF in Europe.

October 28, 1977
West German Chancellor Schmitt, in a speech in London, points to increasing nuclear imbalances in Europe.

March 1978
The HLG demands "evolutionary upward adjustment" of NATO's INF posture.

April 7, 1978
President Carter cancels development of the "neutron bomb," preempts a NATO decision in support of the weapon and its inclusion in arms control. The neutron bomb controversy has repercussions for public opinion, transatlantic relations, and U.S. policies in the INF case.

Summer 1978
The Carter administration decides to support the emerging NATO consensus; the European governments urge the U.S. to complement a NATO modernization decision with an offer to negotiate.

January 5-6, 1979
The heads of the U.S., British, French, and West German governments decide to combine INF modernization with an arms control offer (the "dual-track" approach).

October 6, 1979
Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev announces unilateral withdrawal of some troops and tanks from East Germany. The proposal offers too little too late to affect NATO's decision-making process.

December 3-7, 1979
The German Social Democrats decide to tolerate the NATO dual track decision, if the West is prepared to forgo deployment in exchange for substantial reductions in Europe.

December 12, 1979
NATO's foreign and defense ministers make the INF "dual-track" decision to deploy 572 U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles in Western Europe, and at the same time to offer INF negotiations to the Soviet Union. The decision document contains a vague reference to a "zero option."

December 27, 1979
July 1, 1980
The USSR intervenes in Afghanistan. During Schmidt's visit to Moscow, the Soviet leadership announces it will embark upon INF arms control talks.

January 20, 1981
February 23, 1981
President Ronald Reagan takes office. Brezhnev proposes a moratorium on INF deployment while negotiations take place; NATO rejects it on the grounds that it would freeze the existing imbalance.

May 4-8, 1981
Under increasing European pressure, the Reagan administration is prepared to enter INF negotiations.

October, 1981
Hundreds of thousands demonstrate in Western Europe against proposed deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles.

November 18, 1981
November 23, 1981
November 30, 1981
December 4, 1982
Visiting Bonn, Brezhnev rejects the zero option.
INF talks start in Geneva.
INF negotiations begin in Paris.
The Soviets propose reduction of existing missiles and aircraft to 300 systems each (including French and British forces on the U.S. side), with deployment of no new systems.
The chief INF negotiators, Paul Nitze and Yuli Kuiurnsky, work out a compromise proposal during a "walk in the woods" in Geneva. U.S. and Soviet INF Launchers in Europe would be considerably reduced, and the U.S. would forgo deployment of the Pershing II missiles. The compromise is rejected both in Washington and in Moscow.

December 21, 1982
Soviet General Secretary Andropov proposes to redeploy SS-20 forces in Europe to the same level as British and French forces, if the U.S. forges deployment of new missiles.

September 22-23, 1983
NATO proposes an INF "interim solution" which would allow the USSR with extra SS-20 missiles in Asia.

November 22, 1983
The U.S. starts deploying Pershing II missiles in West Ger-

One day later, the USSR leaves the INF negotiators in Geneva.

September 24, 1984
President Reagan proposes to reduce nuclear armaments to Secretary of State Shultz and Foreign Minister Gromyko to reduce nuclear arms negotiations.

January 7-8, 1985
The Soviet Politburo apparently re-evaluates the SS-20 and concludes that it was militarily irrelevant.

Summer 1985
Gorbachev proposes to eliminate all nuclear weapons worldwide by the year 2000. Part of his proposal is an INF "zero option" confined to Europe.

January 15, 1986
The Soviet Union gives up its demand to count British nuclear forces in an INF agreement.

September 19, 1986
At the Reykjavik summit, Reagan and Gorbachev agree to reduce INF arsenals from 6,000 to 3,000 missiles deployed in Europe and to extend INF to Europe.

October 10-12, 1986
Many European governments favor these results; Bonn and Washington finally con
er other allies to endorse zero INF in Europe.

February 28, 1987
Gorbachev drops the linkage between an INF treaty and SDI. The issue of constraining shorter-range forces (SNF) now becomes the major block to an INF treaty.

March 12, 1987
The U.S. proposes intrusive verification arrangements. Gorbachev agrees.

April 13-14, 1987
The INF treaty is signed at the Washington summit. It en
des more than 3,400 land-based U.S.-Soviet missiles with a
500-5,000 km, and provides for unprecedented destruction of modern weapons systems and intrusive verification including on-site inspections at missile deployment sites.

July 21, 1987
December 7-10, 1987
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May 29-31, 1988
The INF treaty is signed in Moscow. INF talks are exchanged at the U.S.-Soviet summit in Moscow.

of reciprocity are more likely to succeed than coercive diplomacy. The for Tat strategy, for example, calls for one opening cooperative gesture; a subsequent move is cooperative or confrontational, matching the other side's immediately preceding move. The efficacy of Tat is identified in small group experiments, and it is questionable whether it is at all applicable to the complexities of international relations, because it ignores the political context in which the interaction takes place. The strategy also assumes both sides are capable of determining precisely whether an action was to be cooperative or confrontational. Tat is, therefore, particular vulnerable to the error of attribution. When the other state makes a cooperative gesture, policymakers conclude that the other side is attempting to deceive or lul them into lowering their guard; when they themselves make a concession, it is [thought to be] a response to international tensions and the need to prevent war.

Some game theorists have proposed a more forgiving approach of reciprocity in order to overcome this problem of attribution. It is similar to Charles Osgood's proposal of Graduated Reciprocation in Tension-redistributal (GRTD), which requires repeated unilateral "friendly" initiatives in order to reassure the other side about one's own peaceful intentions.

Coercive diplomacy forms the other end of the spectrum of bargaining strategies. It communicates that failure to cooperate would result in a worsening of the other side's security: "You either give in and accept cooperation according to my terms or your own position will become worse." The "cooperative" outcome essentially means that the opponent backs off.

Conditional reciprocity is a more benign strategy. Similarly to coercive diplomacy, it communicates that the security position of the opponent would

Strategies of Cooperation and Coercion

Explaining cooperation among states has become a major focus of international relations theory. The literature dealing with bargaining strategies intended to facilitate cooperation seems to support that reassuring strategies


5. For excellent reviews of this literature, see Alexander George, "Strategies for Facilit Cooperative," in George, Farley, and Dallin, U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation, pp. 692-711; L. J. and Stein, "Beyond Deterrance."
be worsened if the opponent does not compromise. Unlike sheer coercion, though, the strategy does consist of some concessions if the target shows restraint. In the arms control literature, the “bargaining chip approach” represents conditional reciprocity. For example, a weapon is produced and deployed in order to give it away for substantial concessions at the negotiating table. However, there is an inherent dilemma with the bargaining chip strategy. If the bargaining chip has no military value at all, it is unlikely that the opponent will make significant concessions. But if the weapon is indeed valuable enough to induce cooperation, the domestic constituencies which supported the weapon in the first place might create serious obstacles for trading it away later. More important, a bargaining-chip strategy faces a communication problem. The more the punishment side is emphasized (i.e., the closer the strategy comes to coercive diplomacy), the less likely it is that the negotiating partner will perceive the cooperative intention.

1975–85: The Failure of “Bargaining from Strength”

NATO’s 1979 “dual track” approach combined the modernization and deployment of new U.S.–European intermediate-range missiles in Europe with an offer to negotiate reductions. This represented a strategy of strictly conditional reciprocity. Western INF weapons were “bargaining chips,” the Pershing II and cruise missiles were “loaded” with military value, to counter the SS-20 build-up, to implement NATO’s military doctrine of “flexible response,” and to visibly couple the United States to West European security in an era of strategic parity. There is plenty of evidence that the weapons were indeed perceived as a new threat by the Soviet Union. The dual-track approach offered Western constraints only if the Soviets made drastic reductions in their INF.

Thus, the strategy began in 1979 resembled one of “bargaining strength.” How is it that the strategy failed to achieve an arms control agreement prior to the change in the Soviet leadership? It has been argued that arms control track of the 1979 decision was a waste of time, be prevented both sides from entering into serious talks before the deployment took place in 1983. The 1981–83 Geneva negotiations on medium-ranger missiles were doomed to fail, it is said, because NATO had to engage in diplomacy to appease nervous public opinion in Western Europe, time, peace movements emerged in most deployment countries, and the West Germany, and launched vigorous campaigns against the Pers and cruise missiles. Thus, it is argued, the Soviet Union could see whether the West was able to carry out its deployment or given the domestic opposition.

This argument incorrectly blames NATO’s bargaining strategy for the absence of conditions conducive to its success. If the Soviet Union had whether the West would be able to carry out its deployment decision, dual track approach of deployment-plus-negotiations was not, as supposed. It was precisely worked and clearly defined as a strategy of conditional reciprocity. Moreover, if the approach was not always worked, then was that not so on the coercive, but on the cooperative?

the Soviets had doubts about the seriousness of Western intentions, they must have been about arms control, not deployment.

Many U.S. and NATO officials, for example, saw the arms control offer as mere rhetoric to cover the intent to carry out the deployment despite domestic pressures. The 1981 “zero option” was deemed to be unacceptable to the Soviets by most Western diplomats, including U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig. U.S. arms control opponents such as Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle supported the zero option on a take-it-or-leave-it basis precisely because they hoped it would block an agreement. The NATO military tolerated it, because they regarded it as a way to appease a pacifist mood in Western Europe, while assuring timely deployment in 1983. It became obvious that leading U.S. decision-makers were not interested in a compromise at the time, when any real attempt to compromise was repudiated in Washington. In the summer of 1982, during the famous “walk in the woods,” U.S. chief negotiator Paul Nitze and his Soviet counterpart, Yuli Kvititsynsky, had worked out a formula that would severely reduce the Soviet SS-20 force and, in exchange, prevented the United States from deploying the Pershing II missile. The compromise was rejected in both capitals, and the first INF talks ended in a complete stalemate. Are there any indications that a more conciliatory approach on part of the West would have produced a more successful outcome prior to 1983? What would have happened, for example, if NATO had initiated a “Fit for Tat” strategy and announced a unilateral deployment moratorium in 1979 instead of the “dual track” decision?

There are very few indications that the Soviets would have acted differently if the West had adopted a more cooperative strategy. Jonathan Haslam argues that the Soviet decision to deploy the SS-20 was primarily made in response to the U.S. refusal to accept constraints on its forward-based medium-range aircraft during the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) in the early 1970s. Other scholars argue that “the Soviets had considered the SS-20 a routine, if rather belated, replacement for the obsolete SS-4 and SS-5.” If so, a U.S. moratorium on deployment in 1979 would not have given Moscow any reason to forego deployment.

More important, the Soviet Union under Brezhnev’s leadership did show much readiness to accept constraints on its SS-20 build-up. Moscow must have been well aware that its behavior was perceived as threats by the West, since there was no lack of communication between Western Europe and the USSR during the late 1970s. The 1979 NATO decision to prepare an environment of détente in Europe, with diplomatic efforts between East and West intact. While misperception because of communication failures is often responsible for unsuccessful conciliatory moves, probably be excluded in this case. There was no indication that Brezhnev distrusted West European leaders like Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, Jan Lanøggan, or Helmut Schmidt. These decision-makers made it clear that they regarded the SS-20 build-up as intolerable and that the West would take action in the absence of Soviet restraint. From 1978 on, for example, INF issue was at the top of the agenda in Soviet-West German relations. Indeed, a major conciliatory move by the USSR in summer 1979 probably would have prevented NATO from taking the “dual-track” decision because of domestic opposition in those countries where the new NATO sites were to be deployed.

Instead, General Secretary Brezhnev and Foreign Minister Gromyko, whatever reasons, played what game theorists call “deadlock.” The referred continued INF competition instead of mutual cooperation. While the Politburo was preoccupied with the strategic relationship with the West, whether or not it hoped that NATO would not be able to carry deployment because of domestic opposition, remain open questions.

21. See, for example, Helmut Schmidt’s account of his talks to the Soviet leadership in 1977; Menschen und Macht (Berlin: Siedler, 1987), pp. 90-106. See also Thomas Risse-Kappen’s The Zero Option: INF, West Germany, and Arms Control (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1988), pp. 10-13.
22. At least some Soviet officials were aware of this possibility. The Soviet deputy minister at the time, Georgi Kornienko, now concedes that it was indeed the “last gasp of the Brezhnev leadership not to have announced an SS-20 deployment moratorium in summer of 1979. See Georgi M. Kornienko, “Prava i domysly o taketki SS-20,” SSH (1989), pp. 46-48. For an analysis of the Kornienko article see Cynthia Roberts, “Adversaries, Limited Arms Control: Changing Soviet Interests and Prospects for Security Cooperation?” in Michael Mandelbaum, ed., The Other Side of the Table: 1 Approach to Arms Control (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1990), pp. 142.
23. See Downs, “Arms Races and Cooperation.”
In any case, Soviet behavior up to 1983 did not indicate that Brezhnev or his immediate successors were interested in an arms control compromise. During the first INF talks, the Soviet bargaining position did not change very much. Throughout the negotiations, the Soviets insisted that any U.S.-Soviet agreement had to take the British and French nuclear forces into account. This was unacceptable for the United States and NATO and was so communicated to the USSR. The issue subsequently became the major obstacle to agreement prior to 1983. The Soviet leadership also rejected the “walk in the woods” formula in the summer of 1982, which would have spared it the deployment of the Pershing II missiles capable of hitting hardened command and control facilities in the Western USSR. Moscow’s only major concession between 1981 and 1983 consisted of accepting constraints on SS-20 missiles based in the Asian part of the Soviet Union.

Thus, prior to Gorbachev coming into power, the dual track approach failed to achieve an agreement, but not because it was either too dovish or too hawkish. It just did not meet the circumstances. The Soviet leadership had defined the situation in a way that a mutually acceptable agreement was not possible. There are, therefore, two important lessons to be learned from the unsuccessful part of the INF history. First, the Western INF bargaining strategy was based on conditional reciprocity and, thus, came closer to coercive diplomacy than to strategies of reassurance. It nevertheless failed to achieve an agreement in the period prior to 1983–88. Since “bargaining from strength” cannot explain the failure to achieve an agreement during the first ten years of the INF episode, the strategy alone cannot be held responsible for the unsuccessful conclusion of the treaty in 1987, either. Second, no matter how well-defined or well-executed bargaining strategies are, they are likely to fail if they do not meet international and domestic conditions conducive to arms control. This is precisely the difference between the situation before 1985 and afterwards.

21. The decision not to accept limitations on third-country forces in bilateral U.S.-Soviet negotiations was made as early as January 1979 at the Guadalupe summit of the United States, Great Britain, France, and West Germany. The decision was also consistent with U.S. policies throughout the SALT negotiations. Had the Soviet Union insisted on the inclusion of American INF forces based in Europe—the Forward Based Systems (FBS)—the West Germans, at least, would have been sympathetic. For the Soviet negotiating position during the first INF negotiations see Hashem, The Soviet Union and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, pp. 106-140; and Andrew C. Goldsby, “Moscow’s INF Experience,” in Mandelbaum, The Other Side of the Table, pp. 89-119.

22. See the sources quoted in note 3.

23. Hashem, The Soviet Union and Nuclear Weapons, p. 173. This argument is unconvincing. It does not explain why the Soviets shifted their position regarding the linkage of SOR and INF twice during 1985 and 1987. Soviet concern about SOR cannot account for insistence that an INF agreement should only be concluded if progress were made on prohibition of ballistic missile defenses, and the subsequent decision to drop this linkage in February 1987.
balancing rather than cooperative behavior. The SS-20 itself was viewed by the Soviets in this way. As a result, Moscow could simply have continued the INF arms competition. This is precisely what the Soviets did in 1984–85 (after the first Pershing and cruise missile deployment, but before Gorbachev). They left the bargaining table in Geneva, accelerated the deployment of new shorter-range missiles in Eastern Europe, and in 1985 tested a successor model for the SS-20 that was to meet what some Western analysts saw as a “very demanding requirement.” Had the Soviets continued on this path, the Pershing II deployment would have been just another episode in an ongoing arms race, rather than a turning point.

Second, the “bargaining from strength” argument cannot explain the scope of the change in Soviet INF policy. The 1987 INF treaty is not just another arms control compromise to which both sides contributed by making concessions. Step by step, Mikhail Gorbachev turned Moscow’s INF policy around completely. The USSR no longer insisted on including British and French nuclear forces in a U.S.-Soviet agreement. As it had in SALT I, Moscow gave up again on placing constraints on the American Forward Based Systems. Finally and most important, Gorbachev accepted NATO’s 1981 “zero option,” to eliminate the entire SS-20 force, and he also offered to eliminate shorter-range missiles with ranges above 500 km, that is, the modern SS-3 and SS-12 missiles (the second zero of the “double zero” agreement). The Western INF deployment in 1983 cannot explain any of these moves.

Finally, the “bargaining from strength” explanation would be stronger, if learning had occurred among the Soviet decision-makers, that is, if the same leaders who were responsible for Moscow’s intransigence during the early 1980s had initiated the policy change in the mid-1980s. However, Soviet INF policy turned around following a leadership change that brought in new people whose outlook on Soviet foreign policy was different from that of the Brezhnev coalition. As I argue below, many “new thinkers” in Gorbachev’s circle had never accepted the original deployment rationale for the SS-20 missiles and had considered Brezhnev’s foreign policy legacy a disaster all along.

In conclusion, Western “bargaining from strength” did not cause the double zero agreement, but it was not totally irrelevant, either. The failure of the earlier Soviet INF policy, symbolized by the Western deployment in 1983, might have contributed to the change in Moscow’s foreign policy serving as an additional argument for Mikhail Gorbachev and the new leaders that the Soviet Union desperately needed a new approach to security. However, without the change in the Soviet leadership, the U.S. strategy of “peace through strength” would have failed after 1983 as it did not.

Reference to negotiating behavior does not solve the INF puzzle. One look at the international and domestic environments of the negotiating sides to explain the double zero agreement.

The Balance of Military Power: Limited Impact

As argued above, the success and the appropriateness of either “hard” or “dovish” bargaining strategies depend on whether they meet the circumstances of the situation. If at least one side plays “deadlock,” the case throughout much of the INF negotiations, there is virtually no room for compromise, and bargaining strategies become irrelevant. If the game is the “prisoner’s dilemma,” in which mutual cooperation is the preferred outcome, bargaining from strength is likely to produce adverse outcomes: by escalating mutual suspicion. Finally, if each side is prepared to cut no matter what the other side does, specific negotiating strategies are irrelevant as in the case of “deadlock.” Which game is played depends on the preferences of decision-makers which, however, largely depend on international and domestic environment in which they act. These have to be understood in order to determine whether or not the act prepared to cooperate, and therefore which strategies are likely to be effective.

The arms control literature has identified several factors in the internation environment which are thought to be crucial to the success or failure of security cooperation. Among those determinants, the balance of 22.

power figures prominently. Most analysts assume that arms control is more likely to succeed under conditions of a stable military situation. When the military balance favors one side, they suggest, the weaker side will refuse cooperation as long as it can restore parity unilaterally.

At first glance, the INF history seems to support the notion that security cooperation is more likely to succeed in an environment in which both sides perceive the military balance as settled. Prior to 1983, the nuclear balance in Europe largely favored the Soviet Union because of the massive SS-20 buildup. In 1983, with the Western INF deployment, Euro-strategic parity was restored. From now on, goes this line of thought, both sides had incentives to cooperate because the military situation was balanced and predictable.32

There are, however, some problems with this explanation. To begin with, it is not self-evident that the SS-20 upset the military balance. After all, the Soviet Union had enjoyed INF superiority in Europe since the 1960s. The SS-20 buildup constituted a new threat to Western European security only if one assumes in addition that the emergence of strategic parity in the early 1970s neutralized both sides' strategic nuclear arsenals and thus weakened U.S. extended nuclear deterrence for Europe. Moreover, many of the arguments in support of the Pershing II and cruise missiles had nothing to do with Soviet INF, but dealt instead with requirements of the NATO strategy of flexible response and of extended deterrence.33 In sum, the military balance in Europe as such was indeterminate with regard to the issue of who enjoyed

superiority. The various assertions about the nuclear balance in Europe not constitute "objective" realities of the international system, but perceptions categories depending on one's view of deterrence in general and the European relationship in particular.

The Soviet INF buildup had a very different impact in the United States than it did in Western Europe. The Carter administration, for example, did not regard the SS-20 as a new threat. Its INF policy was not driven by concerns about the Euro-strategic balance, but by the notion that the United States had to accommodate in order to preserve alliance cohesion. The INF treaty ratification of SALT II.34 The same holds true for the Reagan administration. Most actors in Washington regarded the INF negotiations as a question of "alliance management," and discounted the military import of both the SS-20 and the Western Pershing II and cruise missiles.35 The INF policy of the United States cannot be explained with regard to considerations about the military balance.

Nevertheless, the SS-20 was important in shaping West European policy. In early 1977, West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt received the SS-20 as a new threat to which the West had to respond. He publicly asked U.S. reaction to the buildup, after Washington had been reluctant to increase INF in the SALT II negotiations.36 Thus, the perception of the Soviet buildup as a new threat gave political momentum to a decision-making process already underway in NATO. It was also the only rationale able to generate sufficient domestic support for NATO's dual track decision in Europe. The argument was that the Soviet SS-20 should not be left without a Western response because efforts to convince Moscow to show restraint had and it ultimately persuaded leading Social Democrats in West Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands whose backing was crucial.37

However, the same decision-makers in Western Europe who were concerned about the Euro-strategic balance and the SS-20 were also

31. This results from the predominance of the realist paradigm in the international relations literature. See, for example, Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979). For a clarification of the classic realist argument, see Stephen M. Walt, The Origins of Alliances (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).
32. For a discussion of American assessments, see Rittel, Altstitrickenwaffen.
34. Flexible response and the requirements for extended deterrence were actually at the center of the INF decision-making process within NATO's military organizations. It was argued that the alliance needed the ability to strike nuclear targets in the Western part of the Soviet Union from European bases in order to secure a "continuous spectrum of nuclear escalation," and make the U.S. commitment for the defense of Europe more credible. See John M. Legge, Verdrängung und die NATO Strategy of Flexible Response (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1983); R. Ernst-Christoph Giehler, Deutsche-amerikanische Sicherheitskooperationen und der NATO-Dreistreckenwaffenvertrag, (Rheinland-Pfalz: Schäuble Verlag, 1986); Peters, The Germans and the INF Missiles; Rittel, Mittelstreckenwaffen; David W. Schmitt, NATO's Nuclear Dilemma (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1985); Sigal, Nuclear Forces in Europe; Thomas, "The LTNI decision."
35. See, in particular, Thomson, "The LTNI decision."
36. See Talbott, Double Gamble.
anxious to bring about an arms control solution. Helmut Schmidt and his Social Democratic colleagues in Bonn, London, and the Hague were instrumental in pushing through the arms control track in NATO’s 1979 decision, bringing both the Soviet Union and the United States to the negotiating table in 1981, and encouraging the West to accept the “zero option” as its bargaining position. This behavior, however, is inconsistent with the “balance of power” assumption, that those who perceive themselves in an inferior military position are unlikely to accept a cooperative solution prior to the restoration of the balance. West European leaders, in a weaker position, saw the situation as “prisoner’s dilemma” in which cooperation could bring mutual benefits, while it was the Soviet Union, in the stronger position, that played “deadlock” and would not seek mutual gains. This is the opposite of what the “balance of power” argument would suggest.

But what about the proposition that security cooperation on INF became possible once NATO had restored parity by deploying the Pershing II and cruise missiles in 1983? First, the “balance of power” argument suggests that the weaker side will change its preferences toward cooperation as a result of having reestablished the military balance. As argued above, however, those in the West, who indeed saw themselves on the weaker side, wanted a cooperative solution all along, and would have favored an arms control solution prior to the Pershing II and cruise missile deployment. Moreover, the West did not change its negotiating position toward a more compromising stance after the deployment had begun in 1983. Second, with regard to the Soviet position, the implications of the “balance of power” argument may run counter to those of the “bargaining from strength” argument. According to the latter, the Soviets returned to the bargaining table because they felt themselves in a considerably worsened security situation, after the Western INF deployment. If this implies perceived inferiority, the “balance of power” argument suggests that such cooperative behavior was unlikely.

It follows that reference to systemic conditions in the international environment does not explain the “double zero” agreement, either. “Balance of power” considerations work through the perceptions of actors. Those actors on both sides, however, who actually were concerned about the military balance, did not behave according to this argument. Moreover, concern about the military balance was intrinsically linked to the domestic balance of power in Western Europe. Thus, if the INF puzzle is to be solved, one has to look at the domestic environment of the decision-makers involved.

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**Domestic and Alliance Politics: Crucial Factors**

While most studies of the conditions for security cooperation focus on systemic level of international relations, the domestic environment of control is more often than not neglected. Little attention is paid to its side, such as public opinion, public interest groups, political parties, or parliamentary processes. The literature on arms control and security cooperation usually confines the analysis of the “domestic environment” study of belief-systems of top decision-makers and their ability to their bureaucracies or the domestic scene in general. If not, the domestic environment or the involvement of the allies are mostly cast as “constraints” on U.S. policies. Some have concluded that “the pulls the allies have been positively disposed toward every negotiated proposal.”

However, I argue in the following that three crucial steps toward the zero agreement—NATO’s 1979 dual track decision, the Western decision to propose a “zero option” in 1981, and, last not least, the turnaround in INF policy—cannot be explained without reference to domestic and politics in the various countries. In particular, domestic coalition-building processes are essential to an understanding of the internal dynamic decision-making, and how external influences affect policy outcomes.

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Coalition-building among foreign and security policy elites in Western Europe and the United States largely accounts for NATO's 1979 dual-track decision. The modernization of Western INF was pushed forward by a transnational coalition of: NATO military and civilian strategists who demanded what was euphemistically called an "evolutionary upward adjustment" of NATO's INF posture to carry out the "flexible response" strategy; centerright politicians in Western Europe and the United States who were concerned that the strategic parity achieved at SALT would weaken U.S. extended nuclear deterrence for Europe; and mainstream and center-left decision-makers in Western Europe, like then German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who became deeply disturbed about the Soviet SS-20 buildup.42

The arms control track of the INF decision resulted from pressures by these mainstream and center-left politicians and by Social Democratic and Labor parties in Western Europe. Beginning in 1977, this group demanded arms control efforts to deal with the emerging buildup of medium-range weapons. Without an arms control component, NATO's 1979 decision would not have found majority support in the West German governing coalition that was crucial for the Alliance, since the Federal Republic was the most important deployment country.43

In other words, what looked like a well-designed and integrated strategy of conditional reciprocity was in fact the outcome of various transatlantic and domestic coalition-building processes which tried to reconcile at least partially incompatible policy goals. The U.S. role in all of this was one of "managing the alliance" and working out the details of the decisions, while the main objectives of NATO's INF policy were determined by domestic politics in Europe.

The controversial nature of the NATO dual-track decision in Europe, and the deterioration of the U.S.-Soviet relationship in the aftermath of the Af

ghenistan crisis, led West European decision-makers to pressure both sides to resume arms control negotiations. They were instrumentally convincing the Soviet Union to enter talks in 1980 and, in early 1981 overcoming the Reagan administration's initial resistance to INF arms control. Again, INF became a matter of "alliance management" for the United States.

More important, however, the 1981 U.S. zero option proposal, which would be accepted six years later by Mikhail Gorbachev, was NATO's response to domestic pressures in Western Europe. The origins of the program can be traced to the summer of 1979, when West German and Dutch Social Democrats suggested that NATO should not deploy the new INF missile, the Soviets substantially reduced their SS-20 force. From that time on, West European center-left insisted that a U.S. negotiating proposal for INF should contain a "zero option." The possibility that under ideal circumstances, the West might forgo deployment of medium-range missiles first mentioned in NATO's still classified Integrated Decision Document taining the dual track decision.44

Two years later, the emerging European peace movements were instrumental in inducing NATO and the United States to adopt the zero option to the formal Western INF negotiating position. As mentioned above, the hot U.S.-Soviet relationship and Reagan's early rhetoric on fighting "missile wars" had triggered mass protests against the deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles. To reassure a nervous public in Europe and, at the same time, to confront the Soviets with a tough opening proposal, an attractive negotiating objective was needed. The global zero option served both purposes. It came about through an unlikely transatlantic realigning European supporters of defense and arms control like Schulte and American opponents of East-West security cooperation, such as Richard Perle. The former group endorsed the proposal as a starting position that was abandoned later in favor of a more compromising stance,45 while the latter supported it precisely because it was considered non-negotiable at the time.

42. Allegro, Dual Track and Double Trouble: The Two-Level Politics of INF, p. 20.
43. For details see Rose-Kapp, Zero Option, pp. 20-26.

46. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt convinced President Carter to include the "zero option" in the INF decision document, according to senior officials who served in the U.S. administration at the time (author's interview).
47. This is how Helmut Schmidt explained his original endorsement of the global "zero option" despite the widespread conviction among arms controllers that the proposal was non-negotiable. Author's interview with Helmut Schmidt, June 1985. The U.S. decision-making process leading to the zero option is described in detail by Talbott, Daily Gains.
However, the uncompromising anti-detente group in the Pentagon was able to dominate the U.S. decision-making process during Reagan’s first term. It blocked various attempts by State Department officials and particularly by U.S. chief negotiator Paul Nitze (for example, the “walk in the woods”) to move the U.S. negotiating position toward concessions in order to reassure the allies. Soviet intransigence during the first phase of the INF negotiations also played right in the hands of Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Richard Perle. As a result, the European peace movements lost the “battle of the Euro-missiles” when deployment began in 1983.68 On the other hand, they ultimately won the peace, due primarily to the turnaround in Soviet foreign policy.

The “Gorbachev revolution” in Soviet foreign policy was indeed the decisive factor which brought about the double-zero agreement in 1986–87. Without the domestic changes in the USSR, one might perhaps have expected a more conciliatory Soviet INF policy in reaction to Western coercive diplomacy, but certainly not the acceptance of the zero option. This turnaround can only be understood in the context of perestroika in general and a broad change in Soviet foreign policy in particular.

The crucial event was the change in the Soviet leadership, as a consequence of which a new coalition became responsible for Soviet foreign policy. Mikhail Gorbachev accelerated a trend which had already begun during the Brezhnev years, and which loosened military influence on Moscow’s foreign and security policy. First, the Foreign Ministry assumed full control over Soviet arms control policy. Second, “new thinkers” such as Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Gorbachev’s personal foreign policy advisor, Alexander Yakovlev, moved into key decision-making positions as the Gorbachev coalition consolidated its power in the Politburo. Third, civilian experts from various institutes of the Academy of Science—the “institutichki”—assumed advisory roles and served as a counterweight to the military expertise in the policy-making process. The “old guard” in the military leadership was gradually replaced.69

68. See Herf, War by Other Means.

The new thinkers in charge of Soviet foreign policy brought with them a different approach to international security centered around the concept of “common security” and the notion of “reasonable sufficiency.” The culmination of the new Soviet approach to foreign affairs has been widely evaluated in the literature.65 However, it is important to note that its intellectual origins combined lessons learned from the Khrushchev era with insights gained from transnational contacts with West European center-left politicians and peace researchers during the 1970s and early 1980s. At the time, “common security,” the notion that security in the nuclear age cannot be achieved unilaterally and by military means, had become conventional wisdom among these Europeans.66 The same reasoning process had led them to demand zero option as the guiding principle for the Western approach to INF arms control during the early 1980s, as argued above.

In other words, it was not just coincidence that the Soviet new thinkers, as it centered around common security, finally accepted the zero option INF. While the new concept of security did not determine a specific Sov INF policy, the mutual elimination of weapons perceived as threatening both sides was clearly in line with it. In sum, there were indeed extant influences on the turnaround in Soviet foreign policy, but they turned to be different from what the “bargaining from strength” argument assumed. These were European, not American, and cooperation-minded rather than coercive in approach.

The complete shift in Soviet INF policy was one of the first examples of perestroika in security policy. When Gorbachev came to power in early 1985, the Politburo began re-evaluating the security policy of the Brezhnev era. This process, the SS-20 decision was also reviewed and it was finally decided that its military importance was not worth its political price. As a result,
by the change in the ruling Soviet coalition. The new Soviet leadership's zero option was a logical consequence of the new policy situation.

The Western response was a dual track of diplomacy and military preparedness. The zero option was not simply the result of a breakdown in negotiations, but also the result of a reassessment of the military situation and the need to retain flexibility for future actions. The zero option was an attempt to prevent the arms race from escalating, while also maintaining the option to use force if necessary.

The United States' response was a mixture of negotiation and military readiness. The zero option was not simply a reaction to the Soviet threat, but also a strategic decision to prevent the arms race from escalating. The zero option was an attempt to prevent the arms race from becoming a self-sustaining cycle, while also maintaining the option to use force if necessary.

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The leadership change in Moscow that brought in a new ruling coalition was the decisive event that accounts for the conclusion of the treaty. The Western reaction to the Soviet SS-20 buildup may have served as an additional argument for the new thinkers: Gorbachev and his advisers might have referred to NATO’s Pershing II and cruise missile deployments to convince a majority in the Politburo that Brezhnev’s INF policy was a disaster for Soviet security interests. But there is ample evidence that the new thinkers themselves were already convinced of the wisdom of common security, and thus of the failure of Brezhnev’s security policy. Moreover, their foreign policy attitudes seem to have been influenced more by Western supporters of arms control and détente than by “peace through strength” advocates.

Thus, domestic politics in the Soviet Union accounts for the timing of the INF treaty. Its content, the 1981 zero option, is also explicable in terms of domestic politics, in this case of Western Europe and the United States. While the European center-left had advocated zero INF in Europe all along, NATO had to appease a concerned public in Western Europe and to fight a growing crisis of legitimacy regarding nuclear deterrence during the early 1980s. The Western negotiating proposal of a global zero option then resulted from a strange coalition of détente supporters in Europe and arms control opponents in the United States.

There are at least three important lessons to be learned from the INF case. Two concern theories of cooperation, the third the end of the Cold War. First, the importance of a favorable environment for the conclusion of an agreement should not be underestimated. In other words, a “good” bargaining strategy cannot make up for a “bad” environment that is not conducive to cooperation. Bargaining strategies alone are rarely able to induce cooperative behavior unless the target is receptive to external influences and already prepared to respond positively. The INF case shows that such a predisposition in favor of cooperation does not come about as a result of specific bargaining strategies, but rather as a consequence of broader conditions in the international environment, the domestic context, or the mindsets of the actors involved.

This does not mean, however, that bargaining strategies are irrelevant. Strategies of reassurance, especially, are most needed and most likely to succeed in cases in which the circumstances on the target’s side are ambiguous in the sense that they neither favor nor exclude cooperation. For example, a group of actors in the target’s policy-making structure is all convinced that arms control is better for the country’s security, but is unable to overcome internal opposition, actions to increase the incentives for cooperation might help to produce a “winning coalition” in favor of cooperation. This may have been the contribution of NATO’s INF deployment to the outcome of the INF treaty.

However, even if one ascribed the cooperative outcome of the INF treaty entirely to Western bargaining from strength, such an evaluation would allow for far-reaching conclusions. It would only show that it pays to be tough, if the target of the strategy behaves in a stubborn way. If, however, the target is prepared to cooperate, bargaining from strength is not useless, but is likely to backfire. The target might conclude that any nation it has to cooperate will not pay off, because the other side is interested in compromises.

The second lesson to be learned from the INF case concerns the significance of domestic politics for the analysis of security cooperation. The domestic context of security policy is still a neglected field in the study of internationalexercises. Particularly, among U.S. scholars. I have tried to show in this paper that the cooperative outcome of the INF case cannot be explained without reference to the domestic changes in the Soviet Union and the pressures exerted on Western policy-makers by public opinion, peace movement, and center-left parties in Western Europe. International influences did not directly produce policy outcomes, but interacted with the domestic political process in the various countries involved. Further research on the domestic politics of international cooperation should, therefore, examine the process of coalition-building among ruling elites within given domestic political-military structures. The impact of social forces such as public opinion and public interest groups in liberal democratic systems deserves further investigation.

The third lesson to be learned from the INF case concerns how the Cold War came to an end. Despite the difficulty of generalizing from one particular case to the broader issue of the profound changes in world politics since the late 1980s, the findings presented in this case study are consistent with those of other studies. They concern, for example, the impact of the U.S. defense buildup during the 1980s on the Soviet defense burden, as well as the reasons for the Soviet retreat from Third World conflicts.60 These analyses corroborate the view that domestic politics in the Soviet Union are crucial to explanations of the fundamental changes in world politics. While Western behavior was not irrelevant, it did not determine the outcome.

Finally, the INF case clarifies the contribution of Western societal and political actors outside the policy-making elite to ending the Cold War. Supporters of arms control and détente in Western Europe and the United States continuously challenged the conventional wisdom of policy-makers, and confronted them with a vision of how to deal differently with the East-West relationship. They achieved some success in Europe, where détente survived the renewed U.S.-Soviet confrontation of the early 1980s. Most importantly, though, their visions of common security were embraced by the new thinkers in the East, and the result was profound. Contrary to what George Bush said, the "freeze people" were indeed heard, albeit by an audience of which they may never have dreamed.


Correspondence

Mobilization and Inadvertence in the July Crisis

To the Editors:

Marc Trachtenberg's recent article makes an important contribution to our understanding of the origins of World War I and to some larger theoretical issues. The July 1914 crisis is a particularly important case. By arguing that military leaders fully understood the implications of their actions, he challenges the view that the politicians did not capitulate to the generals, and that the war resulted from the deliberate calculations of political leaders rather than their loss of control over events. Trachtenberg poses a serious challenge to the commonly-held view of World War I as an inadvertent war.1 Trachtenberg makes us rethink our understanding of the widely-acknowledged German proposal of the evening of July 29-30, when German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg suggested that his government accept great power mediation and a favorable negotiated settlement in order to avoid war. Trachtenberg argues that Bethmann reversed his policy in response to the imminent Russian partial mobilization rather than to a warning from Foreign Secretary Hay that Britain would not stand aside in a continuous conflict. This argument, in conjunction with Trachtenberg's assertion that Britain had never been confident of British neutrality, would undermine the hypothesis that if Britain had made an earlier commitment to intervene on the side of Russia, this would have induced German leaders to restrain their Austro-Hungarian allies. A world war could have been avoided, at least for a while. These historic developments are important for theoretical debates regarding the spiral model, the determinants of war, and inadvertent war.2

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