

# The INF Treaty and Beyond

JOHN BORAWSKI

The agreement on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces signed last December by President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev is by any measure an achievement of historic proportions. The treaty requires the destruction over three years of all land-based missiles, launchers, and related support facilities between the ranges of 500 and 5500 kilometers—meaning the elimination of 1759 Soviet SS-20, SS-CX-4, SS-4, SS-5, SS-12, and SS-23 missiles, and about 859 US Pershing II, Pershing IA, Pershing IB, and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCM). A series of on-site inspection measures will be in force for a period of 13 years to help assure compliance.

As such, the INF treaty represents a number of firsts in arms control history: the first to require substantial nuclear missile *reductions*, the first to require highly *asymmetrical* reductions, the first to demand highly intrusive *on-site inspection*; and the first nuclear arms agreement affecting *Europe*. Moreover, it constitutes a triumph for NATO diplomacy by vindicating President Reagan's initial 1983 proposal for a global zero INF agreement, which was widely dismissed at the time as propaganda.

However, NATO European enthusiasm for the so-called "double zero" outcome (the first zero covering missiles of ranges between 1000 and 5500 kilometers, proposed by the United States, and the second covering missiles between 500 and 1000 kilometers, proposed by the Soviet Union in April 1987) has been at best restrained. Former SACEUR General Bernard Rogers has criticized the INF treaty as testifying to a situation where "political credibility has a higher priority than the credibility of our deterrent."<sup>1</sup> Going even further, West German *Bundestag* member Manfred Abelein, of the Christian Democratic Union, has argued that the double zero agreement means that "for the first time, a localized nuclear conflict would be possible in Central Europe."<sup>2</sup>

Eight years after the NATO 1979 dual-track decision calling for Pershing II and GLCM deployment absent an arms control agreement based

on equal ceilings, and despite year after year of NATO zero option endorsement, how is it that this historic arms control accord has bred so much anxiety? Can it be seriously contended that the elimination of twice as many Soviet as US missiles is disadvantageous to the Atlantic Alliance?

### *INF as Arms Control*

Two basic questions are involved in the INF debate: First, does NATO's strategy of flexible response require the presence in Europe of US missiles able to strike targets on Soviet territory? Second, will the INF agreement, despite its virtues, propel sentiment for the eventual denuclearization of Europe, and thus increase the threat posed by Warsaw Pact conventional strength?

General Rogers, as noted, believes the INF treaty is harmful because it removes a necessary element in NATO's spectrum of nuclear response options. To be sure, SACEUR still has available 480 submarine-launched ballistic missiles assigned to him and the F-111 medium-range bombers based in the United Kingdom. But these systems existed at the time of the dual-track decision and do not pose the same kind of threat the Pershing II did against time-urgent targets—the sub-launched missiles because of accuracy problems and the fact that these were central strategic systems, which political authorities might prove reluctant to release early on in a war, and the F-111s because of the dense Soviet air defense network.

Conversely, the current SACEUR, General John Galvin, and the Chairman of NATO's Military Committee, General Wolfgang Altenburg, have stated that flexible response is not rendered invalid by the INF treaty. Both have spoken, however, of the need for "buttressing measures," so that the relative risk is not allowed to increase. By this they mean modernization across the spectrum of nuclear options, artillery-fired atomic projectiles and an extended-range Lance on the one end, and enhanced longer-range systems on the other, such as a stand-off air-to-ground missile for deep strikes. In addition, General Rogers has suggested assigning a portion of the US sea-launched cruise missile force, currently dedicated to the strategic reserve, to SACEUR. Discussions have also taken place about increasing F-111 deployments in Britain.

An interesting aspect of this debate, of course, is that on the one hand INF treaty supporters argue that the agreement does not harm flexible response, while at the same time saying compensatory measures in the INF-

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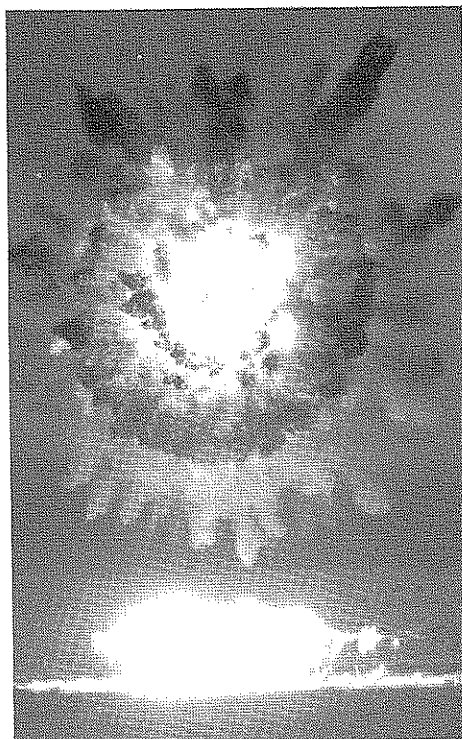
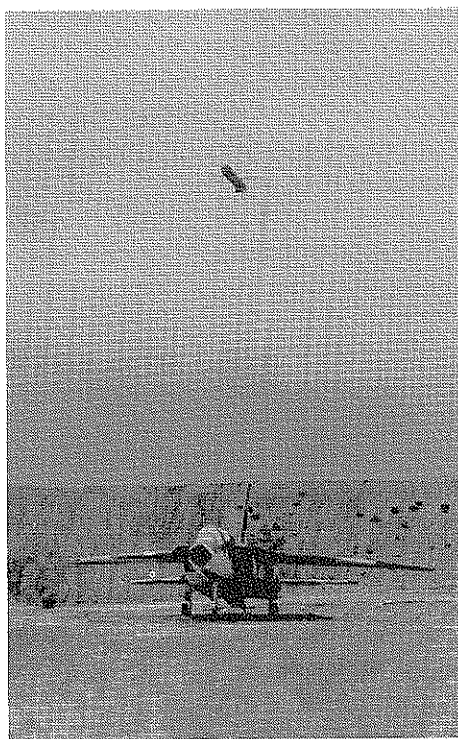
John Borawski is director of the Political Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, the interparliamentary organization of the NATO nations, in Brussels, Belgium. He is the author of a history of the Stockholm Conference on Disarmament in Europe, *From the Atlantic to the Urals* (Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988). The views expressed herein are solely attributable to the author.

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range spectrum will be adopted anyway. For example, according to West German defense minister and the new NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner, "It is now a question of maintaining the option of a strike into the heart of the Warsaw Pact or the territory of the Soviet Union through the modernization of air- and sea-based systems."<sup>3</sup> The offset debate implicitly acknowledges that the Soviet SS-20 was not the sole reason for the US INF deployments, an admission which, in turn, calls into question the sense of a zero option in the first place. But to return to the main issue, do not such dramatic and asymmetrical cuts favor, or at least not disfavor, NATO?

This question has often been posed in the debate. In many ways, however, it is the wrong question to ask. Traditionally, arms control should promote three not necessarily complementary objectives that may or may not have anything to do with reductions per se.

The first is to *reduce the risk of war* either by raising the aggressor's costs through assured retaliation, i.e. revenge, or by denying him his military objectives. Edward C. Luck has made the useful observation that "nuclear arms control has largely focused on the first goal through attempts to stabilize but retain the balance of terror" (assured destruction) while "limitations on conventional arms can contribute most



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**One controversial proposal to enhance post-INF NATO defense is the use of sea-launched cruise missiles. Shown here are before-and-after shots of a Tomahawk cruise missile with a conventional warhead targeted on a revetted aircraft.**

directly” to the second goal (denial).<sup>4</sup> For example, at the NATO-Warsaw Pact negotiations in Vienna concerning a mandate for new talks on conventional arms control on a pan-European basis, NATO has called for the “elimination of the capability for surprise attack or for the initiation of large-scale offensive action” through arms reductions, redeployments, and other limitation measures. Conversely, at the Geneva strategic arms reduction talks (START), the aim is to enhance the survivability of nuclear forces against preemptive attack, rather than deny either side the ability to inflict unacceptable levels of damage on each other (setting aside the question of strategic defenses).

The second objective of arms control is to *reduce damage* should war occur, as in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament negotiations for a global chemical weapons ban, and the third is to *reduce defense costs*.

Reductions make sense only if they contribute to one or more of these three objectives, and most importantly to the first—reducing the risk of war. As Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin pointed out in their classic 1961 study, *Strategy and Arms Control*:

The essential feature of arms control is the recognition of the common interest, of the possibility of reciprocation and cooperation even between potential enemies with respect to their military establishments. Whether the most promising areas of arms control involve reductions in certain kinds of military force, increases in certain kinds of military force, qualitative changes in weaponry, different modes of deployment, or arrangements superimposed on existing military systems, we prefer to treat as an open question.<sup>5</sup>

So does the INF treaty promote accomplishment of the three traditional arms control objectives? Does it pass these arms control tests? And how sure can we be of our answers?

- *Does the INF treaty reduce the risk of war?* That is, does it contribute to deterrence by reducing the potential incentives for aggression at any moment in time?

The commonly cited virtues of the agreement are that it entails the principle of asymmetrical reductions, it reduces nuclear weapons, and it provides for intrusive on-site inspection. None of these apparent virtues answers the question at hand.

To be sure, the treaty changes the nature of the threat environment. According to a NATO source: “The treaty does not leave our targets immune, but it reduces the Soviet options for attack. It makes our assets [e.g. command and control centers, ports, and airfields] less vulnerable to push-button, surprise attack—as their targets will be from us.”<sup>6</sup> And Admiral William J. Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has pointed out that the Soviet theater threat will shift from INF missiles to aircraft, which are more vulnerable to counterattack.<sup>7</sup> Of course,

these same targets could be, and are, assigned to Soviet strategic forces, such as SS-11 and SS-17 ICBMs, SLBMs, and probably new systems such as SLCMs and some portion of the SS-24 and SS-25 missiles, both of which are mobile, with the SS-25 containing the same first stage as the SS-20 (such that SS-25 production plants will be subject to monitoring under the INF treaty). However, if a treaty can now be accomplished calling for 50-percent reductions in strategic ballistic missiles, as both sides have proposed, it may be unlikely that a substantial percentage of either side's strategic forces will in fact be dedicated to theater missions.

But it has been argued that the treaty may also reduce the likelihood of a war in Europe *escalating* to the central strategic level, which flexible response ultimately envisages, by removing what were regarded in the late 1970s as necessary systems to fill a gap in the spectrum of NATO escalatory response options. Particularly in light of the evolution in Soviet military doctrine favoring a localized war limited to conventional means in Europe, the treaty could be argued to increase the risks of conventional aggression, or of conflict limited to tactical nuclear strikes involving the territory of neither superpower. It could even be argued that Soviet attainment of nuclear parity or advantages at all levels of nuclear response options—tactical, theater, and strategic—has rendered flexible response less and less credible, such that even full deployment of the US INF missiles would not have made much difference. That is, if the US president could not be sure that the Soviets would construe an attack on their territory by a European-based Pershing II as somehow less threatening and provocative than an attack by an ICBM, then the war would largely be fought and decided at the conventional level in any event.

Finally, if it is true that both the US and Soviet INF missiles were militarily superfluous and largely symbolic, then the treaty is really irrelevant. Both sides still retain theater strike options in other theater systems and in their central strategic forces, and NATO contemplates deploying new INF systems—efforts which the Soviets can be expected to match. In the near term, more reliance will be placed on NATO air power to accomplish nuclear missions, thus degrading NATO's conventional air strength for several other missions.

In sum, whether the INF treaty reduces the risk of war remains a highly problematic question. Arguments continue and it is probably not possible to answer the question definitively at this time. But insofar as the risk is related to the capability to cover the same targets as the INF systems, the answer, absent further nuclear arms control agreements, is no.

• *Does the INF treaty reduce the damage of war?* In the nuclear era this may strike us as a nonsensical criterion. Nevertheless, yes, the treaty removes hundreds of megatons. But that is only a fraction of the total available megatonnage both sides maintain, and the destroyed missiles account for only four percent of both sides' global warhead stockpiles. On

balance, therefore, we must conclude that the treaty does little or nothing to advance the prospects for damage limitation. Indeed, the reverse is probably true for the near term because of more reliance on less precise weapons.

- *Will the INF treaty save money?* This criterion is not a militarily significant measure, but in an era of defense budgetary constriction it is likely to become more salient. On the one hand, the treaty requires both sides to forgo opportunities to deploy either conventional or nuclear missiles in the stipulated range band. The elimination of the SS-12 and SS-23 may reduce interest in developing an anti-tactical ballistic missile system, as the nuclear, chemical, and conventional threat these missiles posed to NATO targets will be eliminated (although several hundred 70-kilometer Frog-7, 120-kilometer SS-21, and 300-kilometer Scud B missiles are not affected). The special nuclear material of the INF warheads will not be destroyed but will be used for other purposes. On the other hand, in the larger context the removal of such a small percentage of the nuclear force postures on both sides will not make any great economic impact. In fact, there may be a rechanneling effect toward other systems intended to compensate for the INF destruction under the treaty. General Galvin has already publicly warned Western leaders not to expect to be able to reduce defense budgets as a result of the INF treaty. In fact, defense budgets will have to be increased, he says, to pay for modernizing remaining weapons so as to retain credible deterrence.<sup>8</sup>

### *INF as Political and Psychological Balm*

Some would argue, however, that these are unfair tests, suggesting that INF should be viewed as only the first step toward real reductions in strategic arsenals, shorter-range nuclear forces, and chemical and conventional weapons. That may be true. But others would go further by stressing the *political* nature of arms control, which may be almost entirely divorced from military considerations. As Jonathan Dean, former US ambassador to the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction negotiations in Vienna (ongoing since 1973), has argued:

Arms control as an approach for management of the military confrontation is in fact more part of the political East-West relationship than of the military one. It is a form of mutual psychological reassurance between the leaderships of East and West as to their intentions. It is a distortion to apply to it, as is frequently done, the criterion of whether it is militarily significant. Arms control, however partial, is useful; it should not be criticized for not being disarmament, though it should ultimately lead to disarmament.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, many find broad political and psychological relief in the fact that the treaty has been finalized and that Mr. Gorbachev has met with

President Reagan in Washington to sign the treaty. They hope that it will lead to a new era of detente. The SS-20 was disturbing to Western leaders not so much because it represented a qualitative military improvement on the SS-4 and SS-5 missiles deployed since the late 1950s, but because of suspicions that the Soviets had chosen to modernize this arsenal with a view to adding an extra increment in the potential for political intimidation in a crisis. Western leaders were also disturbed that the SALT process had ignored Soviet theater nuclear capabilities, to the detriment of European interests. The INF treaty resolves many of these concerns, and for some groups it goes even further. The West German Social Democratic Party, for example, would have been content for NATO to unilaterally disarm its INF missiles while expecting the Soviets only to reduce their SS-20 force to its 1979 levels (about 120 launchers, or 360 warheads excluding reloads).

When viewed purely in political and psychological terms, however, the West is still not home free. The INF debate on both sides of the Atlantic, though some of it may be hopelessly exaggerated, demonstrates that psychological reassurance has not been uniformly forthcoming. Further, it is difficult to discern what political comfort can flow from a militarily irrelevant or disadvantageous agreement, a difficulty borne out by the seeming lack of appetite on the part of many NATO European governments, with the important exception of the Federal Republic of Germany, for further nuclear arms control agreements, at least for the near term.

Overall, then, it appears from the debate that removal of the Soviet intermediate-range nuclear forces is a good idea; removal of their US counterpart, however, poses a question that will continue to be debated for a long time to come. The probable majority view was expressed by Senator Sam Nunn on 22 March 1988, that the treaty can make "a modest but useful contribution to NATO security," but in the absence of a START treaty its military significance "is, at best, marginal."

### *Beyond the Treaty*

Much of the argument over INF, of course, has been rendered moot by virtue of the treaty's signature and probable ratification. The treaty was favorably reported in the Senate by the Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, and Intelligence committees last March. Debate in 1987 had already shifted to the post-INF universe, and can be expected to intensify.

The starting point for assessing the post-INF arms control environment is the North Atlantic Council communiqué of 12 June 1987, issued at Reykjavik. The operative part reads as follows:

An INF agreement . . . would be an important element in a coherent and comprehensive concept of arms control and disarmament which, while consistent with NATO's doctrine of flexible response, would include:

- a 50-percent reduction in the strategic offensive nuclear weapons of the US and Soviet Union to be achieved during current Geneva negotiations [notice that no mention is made of SDI];
- the global elimination of chemical weapons;
- the establishment of a stable and secure level of conventional forces, by the elimination of disparities, in the whole of Europe;
- in conjunction with the establishment of a conventional balance and the global elimination of chemical weapons, tangible and verifiable reductions of American and Soviet land-based nuclear missile systems of shorter-range, leading to equal ceilings.

The key passage is the last section, regarding short-range nuclear forces. Many observers are concerned that the INF treaty success will lead to calls, with support from leftist political parties, for further nuclear arms reductions. Such reductions might well imperil NATO strategy.

What many NATO governments, including the United States, Britain, and France, intended in this communiqué was to make it clear that the next phase of arms control in Europe should focus squarely on conventional forces. Although the wording “in conjunction with” is somewhat ambiguous, President Reagan clarified the US position in his Worldnet address of 4 November 1987 as follows: “We have agreed with our allies that the existing imbalances in conventional forces and chemical weapons must be redressed prior to any further nuclear reductions in Europe.” This is consistent with the notion of a nuclear arms control “firebreak,” reportedly first advanced by Britain, set at 500 kilometers, below which there would be no negotiations.

However, the West German government has tended to regard the Reykjavik communiqué list as a package that could involve simultaneous, rather than strictly sequential, negotiations. This is hardly surprising given the debate in the Federal Republic that arose after Mr. Gorbachev proposed the second zero option—regarding missiles of under 1000-kilometer range—in April 1987. Chancellor Kohl then stated that a settlement covering only missiles with a range of 500 to 1000 kilometers “would leave out precisely those weapons which threaten our country above all. Therefore, all weapons between zero and 1000 kilometers must be included.”<sup>10</sup>

Disagreement within the Federal Republic over shorter-range nuclear arms control persists. For example, Defense Minister Wörner stated on 16 November that shorter-range nuclear force reductions not preceded by conventional force equality would mean “the end of our security.” But on 6 November, Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher had stated, “We should not be prisoners to artificial links between different areas of disarmament”; and, on 18 November, “I cannot believe that there can be any allied government which prefers that the Eastern side should have more than 600 Scud missiles and that we should not demand from the East that



this superiority be reduced."<sup>11</sup> The West German president, Richard von Weizsäcker, has stated: "Certainly we Germans are not willing to concede that the only nuclear arms left on the continent should be the short-range weapons that can be aimed only at German soil, East or West."<sup>12</sup>

These questions, however unnerving to some NATO governments, are perfectly appropriate. Several allied governments, as noted, are concerned that shorter-range nuclear force negotiations in the near term would stimulate denuclearization sentiment. To counter the effects of agreements which pull NATO's nuclear teeth, some analysts put forth conventional parity as a precondition. However, the goal of conventional parity not only appears realistically unattainable, but historically such parity has failed to compile a superlative record for deterring war. Moreover, most NATO arguments against shorter-range arms control could just as easily apply to the INF treaty, especially because the whole thrust of NATO nuclear force modernization since the late 1970s has been toward longer-range systems that would hit adversary territory.

Current thinking across the political spectrum in West Germany favors shorter-range arms control sooner rather than later. The government appears to favor a solution "as close to zero as possible," whereas various spokesmen for the opposition Social Democratic Party, including party president Hans-Jochen Vogel, have advocated a third zero option. Some members believe the talks should be divided into two groups, one on missiles within the 150- to 500-kilometer range band, and the other on weapons with less than a 150-kilometer range. The latter could be combined with the NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional stability talks, perhaps with a view to negotiating nuclear-free zones along the forward edge of the battle area.

On 18 January, Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze proposed "the total scrapping of nuclear weapons" in Europe, although he did not press for such talks immediately. The Soviets have also sought to discuss nuclear-capable launchers at the conventional stability negotiations expected to begin this year, thus absorbing the moribund Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) negotiations. The West has refused to combine the two, but invariably overlap will occur since artillery, missiles, and aircraft—all dual-capable—will be subject to negotiation. The French are especially opposed to discussion of nuclear weapons in the conventional stability negotiations (a NATO appellation, incidentally), but agreed ceilings would necessarily include nuclear-capable launchers.

Realistically, NATO calls for a pause in nuclear arms control may be the product of wishful thinking. No West German government can be expected to tolerate the absence from negotiations of systems that especially threaten Central Europe. Moreover, in view of the asymmetries that exist—which, according to Anthony Cordesman, entail Warsaw Pact-NATO ratios of 5:1 in land-based, shorter-range nuclear missiles; 5:4 in nuclear-capable artillery; and 4:1 in nuclear-capable aircraft<sup>13</sup>—it is difficult to understand

why further nuclear arms reductions, not to zero but to balanced levels, are somehow taboo. To speak of it as such perpetuates the myth of NATO tactical nuclear superiority, and may complicate modernization efforts, as agreed at the NATO Nuclear Planning Group meeting in Montebello, Canada, in 1983. As witnessed by the March NATO heads of state and government summit in Brussels, debate about the next steps in arms control has precluded consensus on nuclear modernization, such as on a follow-on to the 88 Lance launchers. Conventional stability, of course, is the ultimate test of whether arms control in Europe will provide militarily meaningful results. However, there is no apparent reason why negotiations leading to balanced results in other nuclear forces, thus redressing the current imbalance favoring the Warsaw Pact, must await the outcome of what will likely prove long and arduous negotiations regarding conventional forces. Such negotiations, indeed, may never yield results, if the MBFR talks provide any precedent on this score.

### *Conclusion*

The INF treaty is likely to continue to generate controversy; the agreement, as French defense minister André Giraud put it, “troubles men of good will.” One result has been increased attention to strengthening the European pillar of NATO, particularly regarding closer Franco-German military cooperation and the revitalization of the seven-nation Western European Union. However, these developments are long overdue, regardless of current motive, and can only be welcomed in any event.

Nevertheless, NATO will have to be more creative as the arms control process goes forward. In this context, a few key points deserve attention if the debate is to proceed intelligently and to the betterment of NATO’s security interests in an era of more creative Soviet foreign policy reflecting what may be genuine Soviet interest in a substantial reduction of the confrontation in Europe.

First, it must be made clearer to the general public that nuclear deterrence will remain indispensable until something better is found, if ever. Exaggerated claims for the role of strategic defenses may prove counterproductive, however potentially important such defenses may eventually prove in the next century. It is also misleading to claim that conventional arms control is now more important than ever. Conventional arms control has always been important, but conventional deterrence cannot substitute for nuclear deterrence in the foreseeable future. The Soviet Union may be keen on denuclearizing Europe, and such efforts must be resisted.

Second, governments should endeavor to communicate as the fundamental lesson of INF not that the world is on the verge of some wonderful new era of detente, but that it was NATO’s resolve throughout the deployment ordeal—as opposed to the peace movement—that made the

INF treaty possible. After all, if the peace groups had had their way, NATO would have made wholesale unilateral concessions without the hard coin of generous Soviet reciprocation ultimately won by backbone and patience.

Third, highly asymmetric reductions on the part of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact will continue to be required for meaningful arms control. Already some in the West have attempted to discern purely defensive intent and capability on the part of the East, or have dismissed the military imbalance as irrelevant. Such nonsense must also be resisted.

Fourth, NATO must stress that arms control, however potentially useful, is not synonymous with detente. Cooperation in all spheres of East-West relations must advance concurrently, as through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. We cannot meaningfully speak of "common security" so long as Europe remains divided; our best efforts should be made, without apology, to overcome that cruel and artificial division.

Finally, security policy and arms control must be more closely integrated. Whether one supports the zero option or not, it should be of concern to all that so many commanders, parliamentarians, ministers, and independent analysts have expressed concern about the relationship between the zero option and flexible response. Among other things, we should back away from any notion that the zero option is a universal arms control model, but not allow the concerns raised in the INF debate to paralyze action and preclude beneficial negotiated results in the future.<sup>14</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Closing remarks at SHAPEX '87, Mons, Belgium, 8 May 1987.
2. Quoted in James P. Cross, "Alliance Parliamentarians Debate Arms Control, East-West Relations and Northern Security," *NATO Review*, 35 (October 1987), 7.
3. Quoted in *NATO Latest News*, 15 July 1987.
4. Edward C. Luck, ed., *Arms Control: The Multilateral Alternative* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1983), p. 183.
5. Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control* (McLean, Va.: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1985), p. 2.
6. Richard Balmforth, "INF Treaty Benefits West Militarily, Say NATO Experts," *Reuters* report, 24 November 1987.
7. Testimony before the US Senate Armed Services Committee, 25 January 1988.
8. Harold Briley, "NATO Chief Urges Retention of Nuclear Weapons," *Defense News*, 15 February 1988, p. 13.
9. Jonathan Dean, *Watershed in Europe: Dismantling the East-West Military Confrontation* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, D.C. Heath, 1987), p. 174.
10. David Marsh and David Buchan, "Kohl Urges Wider Scope for Missile Talks," *Financial Times*, 18 May 1987.
11. "2 Bonn Aides Disagree on Arms Cuts," *International Herald Tribune*, 7 November 1987; "Genscher Warns NATO on Arms Control Talks," *Financial Times*, 19 November 1987.
12. "For a Strong Defense and Openness to the East," *International Herald Tribune*, 28-29 November 1987.
13. Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Nuclear Balance, Part Three: The Theatre Nuclear Balance and Western Security," *Armed Forces*, 6 (November 1987), 495-507.
14. For the text of the treaty, which is written in a style comparable in clarity to IRS tax forms, and accompanying documents, see the 396-page *Message from the President of the United States*, Treaty Doc. 100-11, 100th Cong., 2d Sess., 25 January 1988.