

## 'Conflict deferred' from Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (10 May 1979)


**Caption:** On 10 May 1979, the German newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung denounces the limited scope of the SALT II Treaty, signed in Vienna on 18 June 1979, and expresses its fears over how the nuclear arms race might end.

**Source:** Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Zeitung für Deutschland. Hrsg. EICK, Jürgen; FACK, Fritz Ullrich; DESCHAMPS, Bruno; FEST, Joachim; REIßMÜLLER, Johann Georg; WELTER, Erich. 10.05.1979, n° 108. Frankfurt/Main: FAZ Verlag GmbH. "Aufgeschobener Konflikt", auteur:Gillessen, Günther , p. 1.

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## Conflict deferred

By Günther Gillessen

The conclusion of the second SALT Agreement will be described as a major step forward for peace. The arms race between the two superpowers has been reined in. It will save America from spending many billions on entirely new strategic potential. It will serve the process of détente. Not to ratify it would be to undermine the whole process of rapprochement between East and West. The Carter Administration will promote the Treaty along these lines and a succession of Western European governments will publicly urge the US Senate not to spoil the political climate by refusing to ratify the Treaty.

However, these public declarations bear little relation to what most of the Western governments actually think about the Treaty. It will make it more difficult for them to tackle the West's lack of security. The military imperative has become incompatible with the politically desirable objective, détente. It is not the SALT policy that has created this conflict of objectives, however, it is the Soviet armaments policy. The Treaty is not a cause of the growing instability in the deterrent relationship but a symptom of it. According to the American assessment, that instability exists essentially in the fact that, during the course of the SALT II Agreement, the Soviet Union will move into a position where it can target in their bunkers the most powerful element of the American deterrent — the land-based Minuteman intercontinental missiles. As a result, it is irrelevant whether America might also be able to develop a 'first-strike' capability or renounces it. The fact is that the deterrent has already become unstable if one side appears to have acquired the capability to take the other by surprise with deadly effect: that more powerful party must now itself be fearful that its insecure adversary could, in an international crisis, still be tempted to pre-empt any anticipated first-strike by the other side.

For the situation to reach this point demonstrates an underlying difference in the understanding of security. To the Western way of thinking, a balance of power creates stability, which in turn serves as the basis for security. For the Soviet Union — as a political order rather than a society of individuals, an order that is permanently very insecure and paranoid — security exists only in greater freedom of action through clear superiority. It has worked consistently to achieve that goal ever since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

It is true that SALT II contains the arms race and sets certain limits on it. Such negotiations also keep the two rival blocs in contact with each other, something which may prevent misunderstandings. All these aspects may be emphasised as advantages of SALT diplomacy and become more important if this process is now the only link for cooperation in superpower relations.

But what particularly disturbs America and Western Europe is that there are two aspects where the new Treaty does not exactly hinder the Soviet Union in the arms race: the increasing vulnerability of the Minuteman through the improvements to the superheavy SS-18 rockets and the growing vulnerability of the American regional nuclear weapon potential stationed in Europe to the new medium-range SS-20 rocket. Which elements of the SALT policy in general and the SALT II in particular will endure, will have to be considered chiefly in relation to these two points. America needs new, mobile intercontinental rockets, and Europe needs mobile deterrent weapons with a longer range than hitherto. For the time being, the Treaty is no hindrance to either of these. America can develop and test such a new rocket — the MX System — and longer-range regional weapons, such as the long-range Cruise Missile. Only the stationing of such weapons is prohibited for three years, while the Protocol to the Treaty lasts. And they will not be ready for production before then.

The Protocol is fundamentally unbalanced. It does nothing to prevent Moscow from reinforcing its imminent superiority, but it does stop America from neutralising any such move. Will America be able to free itself from these restrictions after three years? Legally, that appears to be a simple matter, but politically, there is no way it can happen. The Soviet Union will then be demanding that the Protocol becomes the core of the SALT III Treaty.

Moscow will seek to make permanent the temporary ban imposed by the Protocol. SALT III is to deny the

Americans the opportunity to extricate themselves from the position of unilateral vulnerability to the Soviet system and will perpetuate that newly established Soviet superiority.

America will then have to decide whether it still wants to continue with the SALT policy. By then, the divergence between military security and 'political' partial or apparent détente may well have become even wider.

SALT II defers the conflict of objectives between East and West for a few years but also intensifies it. If this assumption is correct, it is clearly not particularly important whether the Americans ratify SALT II or not. The advantages of the Treaty or the disadvantages of its failure are limited, but the West scorns it at the risk of being able to enjoy détente in its relations with the Soviet Union only at the expense of a lower level of security.