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'NUCLEAR ALLERGY': NEW ZEALAND'S ANTI-NUCLEAR
STANCE AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE

by

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Peace Research Centre
Research School of Pacific Studies
Australian National University
GPO Box 4
Canberra, ACT 2501
Australia

Biographical Note

Andrew Mack is Head of the Peace Research Centre at the Australian National University (ANU). He was Senior Research Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre in 1984-5 and prior to that taught international relations at Flinders University in South Australia (1975-84). After completing a degree in comparative sociology at Essex University in 1969, he joined the Copenhagen Institute for Peace and Conflict Research as Research Associate for six months. He lectured in sociology at the London School of Economics (1970) and was a current affairs producer at the BBC World Service (1970-2). From 1972-5 he was Deputy Director of the Richardson Institute for Peace and Conflict Research in London. Prior to going to Essex University he served in the Royal Air Force (engineer and pilot) for six years, spent two years in Antarctica (meteorologist) and a year in Sierra Leone (diamond prospector).

Andrew Mack's publications include Peace Research in the 1980s (1985); War Without Weapons (co-author, 1975); The Future of Arms Control (co-editor with Desmond Ball, 1987) and three other edited books. He has published over 40 articles in a wide range of journals including - World Politics, Comparative Politics, Journal of Conflict Resolution, World Policy Journal, British Journal of International Studies, Disarmament, Australian Outlook, Asian Defence Journal and Politics.

Introduction

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the phenomenon of 'nuclear allergy' in the South Pacific by way of two case studies. The first deals with New Zealand's anti-nuclear policy - in particular the ban on nuclear ship visits which led to the crisis in ANZUS. The second deals with the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty and the reactions of the nuclear powers to its passage. The paper argues that the antipathy of the US to these two manifestations of 'nuclear allergy' needs to be understood in terms of American global strategy. The paper concludes with a critique of the argument that 'nuclear allergy' necessarily undermines Western security and suggests that US responses to New Zealand ship ban and the refusal to endorse the SPNFZ Treaty may have damaged US interests at the regional level without advancing them at the global level.

* Thanks to Desmond Ball, Ross Hobbage, Alan Burnett, Graham Christenson, Kevin Clements, Joanne Crawford, Trevor Findlay, Greg Fry, Mary Lou Hickey, Eleanor Hodges, Pauline Kerr, Rhonda McPherson, Peter Van Nieuwen, and Bob White for helpful comments and advice.

Introduction*

During the past three years the South Pacific has become the focus of growing attention and concern in the West - especially in the US and Australia. The causes of this concern are obvious. While long ignored or taken for granted because it was seen as stable and secure, the South Pacific region in the late 1980s suddenly seems to have become a sea of troubles.

In Fiji, the two successive military coups in 1987 by the ultra-nationalist Colonel Rabuka have sent ripples of alarm throughout the region. In New Caledonia, a bitter ongoing independence struggle pits France and French 'Caldoche' white settlers against the indigenous Melanesian 'Front Uni pour la Liberation des Kanaks' (FLNKS). In Irian Jaya a small resistance group, 'Organasi Papua Merdeka' (OPM), which opposes Indonesian control of, and Javanese 'transmigration' to, Irian Jaya, operates intermittently in the Papua New Guinea/Irian Jaya border area.

Concern has also been expressed about possible Libyan penetration of the region. Radical activists with the FLNKS have developed contacts with Libya, and in 1984 17 Kanaks spent a month undergoing 'security training' in Tripoli; OPM exiles have also established contacts with Libya.

* Thanks to Desmond Ball, Ross Babbage, Alan Burnett, Graeme Cheeseman, Kevin Clements, Joanne Crawford, Trevor Findlay, Greg Fry, Mary-Lou Hickey, Eleanor Hodges, Pauline Kerr, Rhonda Nicholas, Peter Van Ness, and Bob White for helpful comments and criticisms.

These contacts, together with Libyan links to Vanuatu (which has also established diplomatic relations with Cuba), have caused some alarm in the US and Australia. Both countries are also worried about penetration of the region by the Soviets or their perceived surrogates - a concern which has been intensified by the upsurge in Soviet diplomatic overtures to the region and by the fishing agreements signed between Moscow and the island states of Kiribati (in 1985)¹ and Vanuatu (in 1987).

The strategic significance of these events is a matter of considerable dispute.² But they have undeniably generated concern - particularly in conservative circles in Australia and the US.

Meanwhile France's ongoing nuclear test program at Mururoa in French Polynesia generates near-total opposition among the states of the region. French concern over a high profile campaign against the tests, which was being spear-headed by the Greenpeace organisation, led to the bombing of the Greenpeace flagship Rainbow Warrior in Auckland harbour in July 1985 where one crew member was killed. Revelation of French responsibility for this act of state terrorism led to a bitter rift between France and New Zealand.

¹ The Kiribati agreement was not renewed in 1986 because the two sides could not agree on satisfactory terms.

² In Australia, concern over the 'Libyan connection', which also focussed on the Libyan office in Malaysia, has attenuated as it has become clear that the importance of Libyan links had been exaggerated.

However from the US perspective, these are by no means the only regional developments of concern. Of equal, perhaps greater, consequence is New Zealand's ban on visits by nuclear-powered and/or nuclear-armed ships, and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty signed in Rarotonga in 1985. New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance has led to an apparently permanent rupture in the security relationship between the US and New Zealand, while Washington (together with France and the UK), has refused to sign the SPNFZ Treaty.

This paper examines US reactions to New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance and to the SPNFZ ('Spinfizz as it is popularly known) Treaty. The first part of the paper reviews New Zealand's anti-nuclear policy and the terms of the 'Spinfizz' Treaty and considers the degree to which these examples of 'nuclear allergy' impede, or are said to impede, US military activities in the region. The conclusion considers the phenomenon of 'nuclear allergy' in a more general way and asks whether it is in fact a threat to Western security as the US claims.

New Zealand's Anti-Nuclear Policy

When a new Labour Government, under the leadership of David Lange, came to power in New Zealand in July 1984, it did so on an explicitly anti-nuclear platform which included the rejection of visits by nuclear-armed and/or nuclear-powered warships. The US was (and remains) adamantly opposed to New Zealand's stance, arguing that the ANZUS allies are obliged by their

alliance commitments to permit US naval visits and that the effective working of the alliance required such visits.

In February 1985, the new Labour government rejected an American request for the USS Buchanan to visit New Zealand. The Buchanan was capable of carrying nuclear-armed ASROC anti-submarine weapons - though it was widely believed within official circles that it was not in fact carrying them at the time. US officials, who apparently believed that they had an understanding with Prime Minister David Lange that the Buchanan would be admitted, were furious when permission was denied.

The Reagan Administration has argued that it is wholly unreasonable for the New Zealanders to expect to be defended by the US in the event of war, while denying access in peacetime to the ships that would defend them. New Zealand was portrayed in Washington as a 'free rider' accepting the benefits of alliance protection, but refusing to 'share the burden' of alliance 'costs'. US officials stressed that there was only one US Navy - not a nuclear Navy and a non-nuclear Navy - and Washington was certainly not going to create a non-nuclear Navy exclusively for New Zealand's benefit. On top of this there was considerable American irritation at what was seen as New Zealand's hubris in challenging the US. This feeling was well illustrated by Mr William Lane, the US Ambassador to Australia who, following the Buchanan incident, stated that, 'New Zealand's Labour Government has been a bad boy and must be punished.'³

³ Stuart McMillan, Neither Confirm Nor Deny: the Nuclear Ships Dispute between New Zealand and the United States (Allen and Unwin, Wellington, 1987) p.99.

At the heart of the dispute, however, were conceptions of ANZUS which were fundamentally incommensurate. For New Zealand, ANZUS was a regional, conventional security relationship; for the US, ANZUS was one element in a global network of alliances based on nuclear deterrence and designed to contain the Soviet Union. Wellington's focus was regional and Labour saw nuclear weapons as irrelevant to regional security; Washington's focus was global and the Reagan Administration saw the cohesion of global alliance relationships and the effective nuclear deterrence of the USSR as being indivisible.

Washington responded to the Kiwi rebuff by denying New Zealand access to military intelligence,⁴ by cutting military exchange visits, and by stopping military exercises between New Zealand and US forces. Initially, the core of the ANZUS alliance relationship - the US commitment to aid New Zealand if it were attacked - was left intact. However, in June 1986, the US withdrew its security commitment. This anticipated the successful passage of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone bill which a year later was to codify the government's anti-nuclear policy into law. New Zealand's status was downgraded from ally to that of 'friend'. In September 1987 the Reagan Administration indicated that it would support a bill in Congress that would place a legal ban on special security assistance and arms export preferences to New Zealand. The passage of this bill will enshrine in law what is already US policy towards New Zealand.

⁴ Not all military intelligence is denied. New Zealand still has access to raw US intelligence data which is related to the region.

Why was the US so concerned about New Zealand's actions? Why did the ANZUS Council Communique, which followed the Buchanan row, claim that the visits of allied ships (possibly nuclear-armed) were 'essential to the ANZUS alliance', when in fact the infrequent visits of US ships to New Zealand were primarily courtesy calls and had almost no direct military significance?

New Zealand, which has a population of only 3.8 million people (plus some 70 million sheep), does not lie on major trade routes, nor does it control any strategic choke points. Its direct strategic significance to the US is minimal. Indeed an American official, asked about New Zealand's strategic importance some years ago, described it as 'a dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica'. Moreover, notwithstanding the various manifestations of increased strategic complexity in the South Pacific noted above, the region has remained fortunately isolated from superpower military competition. The Soviet Navy's surface combatants do not operate in the South Pacific and nor, at least as far as is publicly known, do its submarines.

Following the Buchanan crisis, US Secretary of State George Shultz argued that for the alliance to mean anything, the armed forces of the alliance partners had to be able to exercise together. This was clearly true, but it missed the point that the New Zealand government had not been opposed to combined exercises, and that multi-nation exercises like RIMPAC in which New Zealand participated usually took place far from New Zealand shores and

did not in fact require port visits. Moreover, although for a number of years in the 1960s and 1970s there were no US nuclear ship visits to New Zealand, there was no apparent diminution in the effectiveness of the alliance, neither did the US feel any need to bring sanctions to bear against the government of the day.⁵ So again the question arises – what was so special about the Lange government's actions in 1985?

The answer has little to do with the direct military significance of New Zealand's actions for the US. It has everything to do with Administration fears that the 'nuclear allergy' might spread. 'Nuclear allergy' has become a portmanteau term to describe the various manifestations of political opposition (mostly in the West) to superpower nuclear policies.⁶ US concern about the 'nuclear allergy' – or 'Kiwi disease' as it is sometimes called – was far more salient in the mid-1980s than previously. In this period, unlike the 1970s, a considerable number of US allied governments and political movements were challenging US global security policies. The Greek government was threatening to oust US bases from Greek soil; there was a powerful popular movement in Spain opposing to Spanish membership of NATO; the Netherlands was debating whether or not to accept US cruise missiles on its territory, and throughout the OECD countries peace movements were challenging the assumptions of the nuclear status quo. Washington correctly saw that these challenges were directed more against the US than the USSR, and argued that the spectre of alliance

⁵ It is true, however, that at this time a much smaller percentage of US surface combatants were nuclear-armed.

⁶ For a number of articles discussing 'nuclear allergy' see the special issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, June/July, 1987.

dissension threatened to undermine deterrence and global stability by sending signals of weakening Western resolve to the opportunistic and expansionist Soviets.

It is against this background that the US reaction to New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance must be understood. If New Zealand had been allowed to get away with its challenge to the status quo while still being able to count on the US to defend it, other countries might be tempted to follow suit. The 'Kiwi disease' could, in other words, 'infect' other, more important, US allies whose people were also antipathetic to 'nuclearism'. - As one State Department official put it, '... unless we hold our allies' feet to the fire over ship visits, one will run away and then the next.'⁷

Although the Buchanan affair generated enormous publicity, New Zealand's policy against nuclear ship visits was not unique in the Pacific.⁸ Vanuatu has had an anti-nuclear policy since 1982 when a US ship visit was cancelled because the required assurance that no nuclear weapons were being carried was not given. The Solomon Islands has a similarly tough anti-nuclear policy. In February 1984, the Foreign Minister of the Solomon Islands announced that written assurances would be required from visiting vessels to the effect that they were neither nuclear-armed nor nuclear-powered. Neither of these countries is a US ally, of course, so while the US

⁷ Cited in 'US Tries to Fight Allied Resistance to Nuclear Arms', New York Times February 14 1985.

⁸ Much of the information regarding the ship visit policies of various Pacific countries comes from R.E. White, 'The New Zealand Nuclear Ship Ban: Is Compromise Possible?', Working Paper No. 30 (Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, February 1988).

may reject their policies it cannot argue that they are incompatible with alliance commitments.⁹

In 1983, Fiji placed a ban on visits by nuclear-armed and powered ships. This was, however, lifted in 1984 after US representations were made to the government in Suva. But in 1987 there were indications that the newly elected Labour government of Timoci Bavadra might follow New Zealand's example and institute a nuclear ship ban - certainly the US was concerned that this was a possibility. Fiji's Foreign Minister, Krishna Datt, stated on April 16 1987 that New Zealand's example had been an inspiration to Fiji and that other countries in the region should move in the same direction.¹⁰ Since the coup, Colonel Rabuka has attempted to justify his overthrow of the Bavadra government by claiming that Labour's anti-nuclear and non-aligned sympathies were 'leaning toward the communist countries'.¹¹

Although the 'nuclear allergy' is a fact of contemporary international politics, it is not at all clear that the US has furthered its security objectives in the region by its responses to the New Zealand ship

⁹ In fact Vanuatu and the Solomons have the world's strictest policies regarding nuclear ship visits '...unlike New Zealand, both ban nuclear-capable as well as nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered warships from entering their harbours. The New Zealand government does not prohibit visits by nuclear-capable ships ...' Eleanor Hodges, 'The "Nuclear Allergy" of Small Nations: a "Sickness" Unto Life?' (unpublished paper, Department of Sociology, University of California, San Diego, 1987) p.16.

¹⁰ See David Hegarty, 'Fiji Spreads Ripples of Concern', Pacific Defence Reporter (June 1987) p. 46.

¹¹ Cited in George Negus, 'The Way the World Should Be', The Bulletin (October 13, 1987) p.101.

ban. Indeed there are some reasons to believe that the US stance has been counterproductive.

First, the publicity which followed the Buchanan incident may have exacerbated the very 'demonstration effect' that the US wanted to prevent. Labour's anti-nuclear policy received relatively little publicity outside New Zealand until the Buchanan episode. Following the crisis, David Lange appeared on radio and TV talk shows across the US to put New Zealand's point of view, beat Jerry Falwell in a televised debate at the Oxford Union, and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. It is unlikely that any of this would have happened had the confrontation over the Buchanan not taken place.

Second, there is scant evidence that the US response to the crisis - i.e. the suspension of intelligence flows, joint exercises and so forth - has had a negative impact on the Lange government's popularity. On the contrary Labour's anti-nuclear stance remains extremely popular with the electorate. Moreover, according to public opinion polls published soon after the Buchanan affair, a majority of New Zealanders believed that they had been unfairly treated by the US and rejected the US claim that they shirked their ANZUS obligations.¹²

Popular support for the government's anti-nuclear stance also helps explain why the conservative National Party opposition sought in the 1987 election

¹² McMillan, Neither Confirm Nor Deny, p.102. Opinion polls also reveal continuing and very high levels of popular support for the ANZUS alliance in New Zealand.

campaign to present itself as an anti-nuclear party. Jim Bolger, the leader of the National Party, stated in July 1987, 'We don't want them [nuclear weapons] here, we don't need them here and they [the Americans] don't need them here ...'¹³

Although there was initially concern in Wellington that the US might bring economic sanctions to bear against New Zealand over the ship ban this has not happened.¹⁴ Indeed, trade with the US has actually increased since February 1985, as has tourism. (Ironically, Australia, which opposed New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance, has lost hundreds of millions of dollars in lost wheat and sugar sales as a consequence of US farm export policies; New Zealand, which is not a major exporter of any of these commodities has not been similarly affected.) If the US response to the Buchanan incident was intended to demonstrate that challenging American nuclear policies involved high costs for the challenger, it is by no means clear that it has succeeded.

New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance has gained world-wide publicity while the Lange government, presenting itself to the electorate as David confronting the American nuclear Goliath, has not been harmed politically. Within the

¹³ New Zealand Herald (9 July 1987). Mr Bolger has indicated that the National Party would adopt a position similar to that of Denmark and Japan. However David Addington, a senior Republican Party official subsequently stated that 'New Zealand could not rejoin ANZUS under the National's nuclear policy.' The US embassy in Wellington noted that Mr Addington was not speaking in an official capacity.

¹⁴ There were, however, a number of US threats to use economic sanctions against New Zealand - from former Navy Secretary John Lehman among others.

Labour party itself, support for the government's strong anti-nuclear stand and a desire to preserve it, has attenuated what otherwise could have been a concerted and politically damaging assault from the Left on the Lange government's radical free-market economic policy. In the 1987 New Zealand election ANZUS was not a major issue. Labour won re-election despite extraordinarily high unemployment and inflation levels.

The Costs of the ANZUS Rupture

There is no doubt that the break with the US, even if it incurred no domestic political costs for the Labour government, has had a decidedly negative impact on the operational capabilities of New Zealand's armed forces. This is particularly true of the New Zealand Navy.¹⁵

Exercises with allies are extremely important for small navies and it is in precisely this area that the NZ Navy has been most affected by the ANZUS split. In August 1985, the NZ Ministry of Defence revealed that:

... it had to cancel and restructure 22 joint exercises planned for 1985. This represented a loss of some 6000 man days of training time.¹⁶

Moreover, '[w]hereas in 1983/84 the [NZ Navy] spent some 235 days exercising with foreign ships, in 1985/86 it had 63 days and in 1986/87, 78

¹⁵ See Peter Jennings, 'The ANZUS Split and the New Zealand Armed Forces: Costs and Consequences', paper presented to the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, University of Auckland, New Zealand (August 27, 1987).

¹⁶ Ibid. p.6.

days.'¹⁷ New Zealand has also been excluded from the multi-nation RIMPAC exercises as well as ANZUS exercises.

But if the ANZUS split has had negative consequences for the New Zealand armed services, it has also been costly for the US and the other allies. New Zealand's exclusion from the Pacific alliance network weakens the alliance as a whole, as well as isolating New Zealand. Even if the rupture in the alliance is eventually repaired, it will be difficult to return to the status quo ante. The lack of contact between the NZ and US armed services during the period of the rupture will have considerably degraded interoperability.¹⁸

From the US perspective, it might seem to be particularly unfortunate that the split with New Zealand - which, unlike Australia, has traditionally seen its security priorities and responsibilities as lying in the South-West Pacific - should have taken place at a time of growing concern about instability in the region.

Is there any way in which the crisis could have been avoided? One possibility would have been for the US to have publicly rejected New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance, but not to have requested permission from Wellington for a visit by a nuclear-capable ship. In this way both the confrontation and the consequent breakdown of the alliance could have been

¹⁷ Ibid. p.8.

¹⁸ Even without reparation of the formal alliance split it might be possible, given a different administration in Washington, for exercises to be resumed between the US and New Zealand.

avoided. The result would, of course, have been less than satisfactory for the US than the status quo ante, but would arguably have been better from Washington's point of view than the present impasse. This is especially so since the difference between the current New Zealand position on ship visits and that of a number of other US allies is, in theory at least, not that great.

Like New Zealand, Denmark, Iceland and Japan also have policies which prohibit nuclear-armed ships visiting their ports.¹⁹ In the Danish and Icelandic cases, unlike that of New Zealand, there is no legislation which permanently excludes nuclear weapons but, in accord with a NATO understanding of 1957, there is agreement that nuclear weapons not be deployed in a NATO state without the express permission of its government. In Japan's case the three nuclear principles announced by Prime Minister Sato in 1966 stipulate, among other things, that Japan will not allow the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japanese territory.²⁰

19 Norway is sometimes instanced as another NATO ally which precludes nuclear-armed ship visits. In fact Norway's position is ambiguous. In 1975 the Norwegian Prime Minister stated that his country's policy was '... that nuclear weapons should not be carried on board foreign military vessels during calls to Norwegian ports.' But in 1982 the Norwegian Defence Minister stated that the Norwegian government had, '... never considered visits by allied or Soviet ships possibly carrying nuclear weapons as a breach of Norwegian policy.' Both cited in McMillan, Neither Confirm Nor Deny, pp.65-66.

20 See White, 'The New Zealand Nuclear Ship Ban', pp. 2-3. A memorandum attached to the Japan-United States Security Pact of 1960 stated that prior consultation was necessary for any major changes being made to the types of weapons systems being brought into Japan by the US. The introduction of nuclear weapons is seen as constituting such a change.

The difference between the Danish and New Zealand positions is interesting. Both prohibit the entry of nuclear-armed warships and neither country has a policy of asking if ships which request a visit are carrying nuclear weapons. The only difference between the policies of the two countries is that the New Zealanders, unlike the Danes, would try and determine whether the warships due to visit their country actually did carry nuclear weapons. New Zealand's anti-nuclear legislation, passed more than two years after the Buchanan incident, requires the Prime Minister to 'make a determination' (but not one based on physical inspection or secret intelligence) as to whether a warship which was seeking to visit New Zealand was nuclear-armed. Quite how the Prime Minister would make such a determination has never been made clear.

Following the Buchanan crisis some New Zealand officials still hoped that a compromise solution could be found. Since both the request for a ship visit and the New Zealand response to it could be made privately there would, it was argued, be no need to reveal the identity of a ship which had sought permission to visit, if Wellington had determined that it was nuclear-armed. Keeping such information from the Soviets had always been the central strategic rationale for the 'neither confirm nor deny' policy.²¹ This compromise would, however, let the Soviets know which ships were not carrying nuclear weapons. Quite apart from this objection there was no chance that the US would accept any such compromise. Washington's primary objective during the crisis was not so much to ensure that a few US

²¹ In fact even this compromise would not necessarily resolve the crisis since New Zealand's anti-nuclear legislation prohibits nuclear-powered ship visits as well as nuclear-armed ship visits.

warships a year could again enter New Zealand harbours, but to counter the threat that 'nuclear allergy' was perceived to pose to the overall integrity of the Western alliance structure. Any compromise proposal which could be interpreted as a US backdown would have undermined America's primary objective of checking the spread of 'nuclear allergy'.

'Neither Confirm Nor Deny'

The US Navy's 'neither confirm nor deny' (NCND) policy is not without contradiction. For example, if the US does in fact respect the nuclear weapons ban of allies like Denmark, then as Professor Robert White of Auckland University has pointed out, it effectively breaches the NCND policy every time a nuclear-capable ship visits a Danish port. If the US abides by Danish policy such a visit is effectively a statement that the ship involved is not carrying nuclear weapons.²²

²² The question of whether or not the US does in fact respect, or even claim to respect, the nuclear ship bans of allies other than New Zealand is controversial. The 1960 Japan-United States Security Pact has a provision which stipulates that prior consultation must take place before major changes are made in the deployment of US armed forces into Japan. Japan takes this to mean that the US would be required to consult before introducing nuclear weapons into Japan. In August 1986, just before the planned visit of the US battleship New Jersey to the port of Sasebo, Japan had asked the United States to respect its policy of not making, possessing or introducing nuclear weapons. The New Jersey was carrying Tomahawk missiles which are capable of carrying nuclear weapons. US Ambassador Mike Mansfield replied that the United States fully understood Japanese sentiments and would respect the Japan-United States Security Pact. (See McMillan, Neither Confirm Nor Deny, p.141). In fact there is considerable evidence that US warships have taken nuclear weapons into Japanese ports. This was admitted in an interview in a Japanese newspaper in 1981 by Edwin Reischauer, US Ambassador to Japan between 1961 and 1966. A declassified telegram sent by the US State Department to the US embassy in Tokyo in February 1966, and recently uncovered in the US Library

Moreover the NCND policy is not applied with consistency. For example, although in theory it affects aircraft as well as warships (except missile-firing submarines), an exception has been made for the B-52 strategic bombers which make training flights over Australia and land at Darwin. In 1981 when an agreement was made to permit the B-52 visits, the US admitted that the bombers concerned would be unarmed.

The official strategic rationale for NCND is that it is designed:

... to withhold from a potential enemy information that could be used against US forces in the event of a conflict. By forcing a potential enemy to treat all stations and units as if they were fully nuclear-armed, the US can complicate its tactical and strategic problems.²³

This argument has an obvious logic, but it misses a number of salient points.

First, the military significance for the USSR of US ships which may be armed with short-range nuclear weapons (e.g. the ubiquitous ASROC), is determined not so much the presence or absence of the weapon, but by the location of the ship. In wartime the Soviets would almost certainly not target a US frigate if it were remote from a combat zone even if it were known to be carrying nuclear-armed ASROCs. In such a situation the nuclear

of Congress, refers to confidential arrangements between the US and Japan relating to the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan under the 1960 Japan-United States Security Pact. (See White, 'The New Zealand Nuclear Ship Ban', pp.7-9).

²³ U.S. Defense Posture in the Pacific (United States Information Agency, Washington D.C., September 1987) p.17.

weapons (which have a range of less than 10 nautical miles) would be of no military significance. If, on the other hand, the ship were in a combat zone it would be targeted even if it were known not to carry nuclear ASROCs.

Second, US carriers which can deploy nuclear-armed attack aircraft would certainly be targeted by the Soviets if they were in or near a combat zone in a war. There are also a number of surface combatants capable of carrying the US Navy's long range land-attack Tomahawk sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM) which can be armed with a nuclear warhead. Even when the 600-ship Navy shipbuilding program is completed, there will still be less than 100 of these ships. They will include the refurbished battleships, the Ticonderga and California class cruisers, and the Burke and Spruance class destroyers.²⁴ Not knowing which of these combatants may be carrying nuclear as against conventionally-armed, Tomahawks will not necessarily 'complicate' Soviet targeting. The Soviets will target all ships carrying Tomahawk since conventionally armed land-attack Tomahawks also pose a serious threat to high-value Soviet targets on land.

Third, if the New Zealand government, without access to allied intelligence and without recourse to physical inspection, can determine whether or not a US ship is carrying nuclear weapons then it is very difficult to believe that the Soviets could not do so as well. Indeed if nuclear weapons can be readily detected by remote sensors then the entire strategic rationale for

²⁴ Most US attack submarines and all carriers are nuclear-armed and would certainly be targeted by the Soviets in combat - if they could be located.

NCND fails. There is considerable evidence at least from the US side that this may indeed be possible. Much of the evidence in the public domain has been published in a paper by Gary Brown, a Senior Defence Research Specialist at the Legislative Research Service of the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia.²⁵

Brown shows that the US Navy has a number of classified projects related to NUCINT (nuclear intelligence). NUCINT has been described as being:

... directed towards developing a nuclear intelligence program to provide data on Soviet nuclear deployment policies and their naval weapons capabilities.²⁶

US nuclear weapons detection systems may already be operational. For example, a 1983 study of Arab covert operations against Israel claimed that a US SR-71A reconnaissance aircraft carrying radiation sensors detected the arming of nuclear weapons by the Israelis during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. There have also been claims that during the same period Soviet nuclear weapons were detected in Soviet ships transitting the Bosphorus.²⁷ In 1985, a report in the Australian press suggested that an operational nuclear weapons detector was deployed in Singapore overlooking the Malacca Straits. Sometime later the Australian Defence Minister confirmed in answer to a question in Parliament that, 'highly sensitive detectors capable of

²⁵ Gary Brown, 'Detective of Nuclear Weapons and the US Non-Disclosure Policy', Working Paper No.107 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, November, 1986).

²⁶ The quotation is from a 1978 report from the US consulting firm DMS Inc. and is cited in Brown, 'Detection of Nuclear Weapons', p.5.

²⁷ Brown, 'Detection of Nuclear Weapons', p.8.

detecting the low levels of radiation emanating from nuclear weapons have been in laboratory use for years.'²⁸ But he refused to comment on whether or not Australia possessed any such operational capability.

There is some evidence that they do have this capability. At the Washington summit Mr Gorbachev stated that the Soviets had the technology to verify the presence and even the capacity of nuclear weapons on ships. This could be achieved 'without any actual verification or inspection on the vessels themselves'.²⁹ Gorbachev's revelation was made in the context of a discussion on negotiating limits to nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs). The US has resisted attempts to negotiate limits on SLCMs, arguing that since it was not possible to distinguish between nuclear and conventionally-armed versions of SLCMs, verification of such an agreement is not possible. The Soviets are not only saying that they can remotely identify ship-borne nuclear-armed missiles, but they have also offered to share their technology with the US³⁰ which, presumably, they would not have done if it did not work as claimed.

If, as suggested, the strategic rationale for NCND is unpersuasive, what other reason might there be for the US insistence that it not be breached? The answer has to do with alliance politics rather than strategy in any immediate sense. The US seeks to arrest the spread of the 'nuclear

²⁸ Cited in Brown, 'Detection of Nuclear Weapons', p.10.

²⁹ See 'Kremlin Offer on Detection', The Weekend Australian (December 12-13, 1987) p.13. This story was based on an Agence France Presse report from Washington.

³⁰ Ibid.

allergy', while America's allies do not wish to rupture alliance relationships. NCND is convenient for both because the known presence of nuclear weapons on particular US ships visiting allied ports could become a powerful symbol against which the forces of anti-nuclearism could rally. ³¹

If the above is true, then NCND functions more to keep information from the citizens of states allied to the US than from the Soviets. And insofar as the strategic rationale for NCND is invalid it is difficult to see how denying citizens in a democracy information about the nuclear status of visiting ships can be justified.

The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone

At Rarotonga in August 1985 the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty was signed at the annual meeting of the South Pacific Forum, by a majority of the Forum states. The SPNFZ Treaty is similar in concept to the Treaty of Tlatelolco which created a nuclear-free zone in Latin America.³²

³¹ The Soviets have recently indicated that they are prepared to declare whether or not their warships are carrying nuclear weapons when they seek permission to visit foreign ports. See Statement of Embassy of USSR Oslo on March 27 1987 which states, in case of requests, the Soviet Union is ready to tell Norwegian Authorities that there are no nuclear weapons onboard Soviet military vessels when calling in Norwegian ports'.

³² 'Spinfizz' goes further than the Tlatelolco treaty in that it also unambiguously bans peaceful uses of nuclear explosives and prohibits the dumping of radioactive wastes in the zone area.

Like Tlatelolco, the 'Spinfizz' Treaty prohibits the manufacture or acquisition of nuclear weapons by member states (this is also prohibited by the Non-Proliferation Treaty). 'Spinfizz' also bans the stationing of nuclear weapons on the territories, or within the territorial waters, of the treaty states. There is, however, no proscription on the transit of ships carrying nuclear weapons anywhere within the zone area - including the territorial waters of member states.

The Treaty permits port visits by nuclear-armed ships and the testing of unarmed nuclear delivery systems - e.g. missiles - within the zone, as well as the presence of command, control, communication and intelligence (C3I) facilities which are an integral part of the nuclear infrastructure.³³

The relatively permissive nature of the Treaty - it does not preclude any of the nuclear-related activities currently being pursued by the US in the zone area - has led to criticisms that it is merely cosmetic and of no substantial arms control value. Vanuatu, for example, declined to sign the Treaty on the grounds that it is neither consistent nor comprehensive enough - Vanuatu believes that port visits by nuclear-armed ships should be banned. However it is clear that had a provision banning such port visits been inserted into the Treaty text it would never have been signed by the more conservative Polynesian states or by Australia - let alone the US. The Treaty does, however, provide that individual states retain the option of banning ship visits.

³³ While the Treaty bans the stationing of nuclear weapons in the Treaty zone, the point at which 'transit' of nuclear weapons or 'port visits' of nuclear-armed ships becomes 'stationing' is not clear.

The five nuclear-weapon states (the US, the USSR, France, Great Britain, and China) are invited to sign Protocols to the Treaty which require them not to manufacture, test, or station nuclear weapons within the zone. They are also required not to threaten to use, or to actually use, nuclear weapons against any of the parties to the Treaty.

France, which correctly saw the Treaty as being directed in large part against its nuclear test program, has naturally refused to sign the Protocols. The US, after considerable debate within the Administration, indicated in February 1987 that although the Treaty did not directly affect any American operations in the region, it would not sign the Protocols on the grounds that this could encourage proponents of nuclear-free zones elsewhere. In March 1987, Britain indicated that it would not sign the Protocols on the grounds that this would not be in Britain's interest.

In April 1987, Australian Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, strongly criticised the US, Britain and France for their rejection of the Treaty which he described as a 'severe and entrenched obstacle to arms control' and as 'a mistake which I fear they will regret in their future dealings with South Pacific nations.'³⁴ Australia has been particularly angered by the US refusal to endorse the Treaty since the Hawke government went to considerable lengths during the drafting and negotiation of the Treaty to ensure that any possible US objections were taken into account.

³⁴ Financial Times (May 1 1987).

Moscow's Position

The Soviets signed the relevant Protocols to the Treaty in December 1986. China followed suit in February 1987, but the US, the UK and France have all refused to sign. Of Moscow's prompt endorsement of the treaty US News and World Report noted that the USSR 'stands to win more popularity in a region where it is moving fast to expand its influence and presence.'³⁵

However, apart from the professional diplomats, few observers took much notice of reservations the Soviets made about the Protocols when signing them - reservations which made their apparent endorsement of the Treaty virtually meaningless.

In a statement in Pravda on December 15 1986,³⁶ the Soviets correctly noted that Article Three of the Treaty states that the parties to the Treaty undertake not to:

... possess or have control over any nuclear explosive device, by any means anywhere inside or outside the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone.

This article was taken by Moscow to mean that a provision in Article Five of the Treaty which allows visits by foreign ships which may be nuclear-armed is invalid and that such visits are in fact a violation of the Treaty.

³⁵ US News and World Report, February 23 1987, p.31.

³⁶ Reprinted in The Arms Control Reporter No 1. (1987) p. 456.D.3

The Soviets further argued that if parties to the Treaty violated their obligations under the Treaty, the USSR would 'retain the right to review its commitments' under Protocol Two. Protocol Two enjoins the invited signatories (the nuclear-weapon states) not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against parties to the Treaty.

Some of the parties to the Treaty (most obviously Australia) do, of course, permit what the Soviets claimed was a treaty violation - namely visits by nuclear-armed ships. The clear implication was that the Soviets did not, therefore, feel bound to abide by their Protocol II commitment not to make nuclear threats against parties to the Treaty. This is a matter of more than academic interest for Australia. In the past Moscow has repeatedly warned that the joint US/Australia defence facilities in Australia would be nuclear targets in the event of a superpower war.

The statement the Soviets issued when they signed the Protocols to the Treaty in December 1986 did not distinguish between the parties to the Treaty (i.e. the states of the South Pacific Forum) and the parties who are asked to sign the Protocols (i.e. the five nuclear powers). This distinction is, however, critical. Article Three of the Treaty calls only on Forum countries not to 'exercise control over any nuclear explosive device anywhere inside or outside the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone'. Since none of the Forum countries does have control over any nuclear weapons this treaty requirement is in no sense compromised.

The requirements of Article Three do not apply to the nuclear powers as the Soviets suggested, nor is there any way in which the Treaty can be read to arrive at this conclusion.

In private conversations Soviet officials have suggested that, although their interpretation of the Treaty means that nuclear ship visits to Treaty states, constitute a violation, they would nevertheless continue in practice to observe the Forum countries understanding of the Treaty - i.e. that nuclear ship visits are allowed. But whatever the private and unattributable views of individual Soviet officials, the fact remains that for over a year after signing the Protocols the Soviets failed to release any official or public statement indicating that they supported the Forum countries' position. Forum state governments found this quite unsatisfactory and considerable pressure was brought to bear on the Soviets - particularly by Australia - to change their position.

In February this year the Soviets indicated that they would ratify the Treaty Protocols. A message from the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet to the Forum states indicated a change in Soviet position. Although the message had some ambiguous phrases which could be interpreted as adhering to the original Soviet position, lawyers from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade believe that the new Soviet position is a great improvement on the previous one. In particular they are satisfied that the Soviets are now committed to observing the Forum countries' understanding of the Treaty and not the tendentious interpretation of it which is discussed above.

Interestingly the original Soviet position on the Treaty revealed a perception of its strategic implications quite at odds with that of the US. Whereas the US sees 'Spinfizz' as a threat to US interests, the Soviets clearly see it as more supportive of Western security interests in the region. They have a point. Moscow is very well aware that it is most unlikely to receive invitations for its nuclear-armed warships to visit the ports of the Forum states. US warship visits, by contrast, are welcomed by most of the Forum governments. Moscow's push for a ban on port access for all nuclear-armed ships reflected its assessment that such a ban would disadvantage the US Navy more than the Soviet Navy. A similar assessment underpinned the Soviet enthusiasm for New Zealand's nuclear ship ban and Moscow's openly expressed hope that the Lange government's action would 'set off a chain reaction leading to the collapse of the ANZUS bloc'.³⁷

US Objections to 'Spinfizz'

It is not at all clear at first sight why the Reagan Administration should have decided against endorsing the 'Spinfizz' Treaty. The US had after all signed the very similar Latin American Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty, and, as already noted, Australia had gone to considerable lengths to ensure that none of the 'Spinfizz' Treaty provisions hampered any current US military activities.

³⁷ Radio Moscow broadcast cited by Peter Samuel in 'The U.S. and Australia: an Alliance Adrift?', The World and I (May 1987) p.119.

Moreover, in 1984, Admiral William Crowe, then the US Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific, had said of the 'Spinfizz' proposal in an interview with Pacific Defence Reporter:

It leaves each country to decide for itself whether ships could transit its waters, enter its ports and what arrangements for those ships and units and aircraft would be and it does not infringe on those rights that are protected by international law, either high seas rights or transit rights. Those meet our criteria and I do not think that the United States would have great trouble with that.³⁸

In the view of most of America's friends in the Pacific, and many analysts in the US itself, there would have been few security costs if any involved in a US endorsement of the Treaty, but considerable political costs in rejecting it. Steven J. Solarz, the influential Chairman of the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, described the Administration's refusal to sign the Protocols as providing the Soviets '... with a serious propaganda bonanza in the South Pacific.'³⁹

In a similar vein a report issued earlier this year by the conservative Hawaii-based Pacific Forum noted that:

There is resentment and in some quarters bitterness because the United States refused to sign the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty despite the fact that the Treaty was crafted to meet potential American objections and was in line with the Latin American Treaty of Tlatelolco to which the United States is a party.⁴⁰

³⁸ Admiral William Crowe, interview in Pacific Defence Reporter (December 1984/January 1985).

³⁹ Quoted in Neil A. Lewis, 'US Bars Nuclear Free Zone for Group of Pacific Nations', New York Times (February 5 1987).

⁴⁰ The United States and the South Pacific, a report by the Pacific Forum, Honolulu; the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley; and the Center for Asian Pacific Studies, the Asia Foundation, San Francisco (Honolulu, Summer 1987) p.10.

Furthermore, as a House of Representatives Subcommittee on East Asia noted in July 1987, the Treaty satisfies the seven criteria which the State Department itself had specified must be met if a nuclear-free zone proposal was to be acceptable to the US.⁴¹

Why then was the US prepared to pay the very considerable regional political costs which its refusal to endorse the Treaty was bound to generate? Was it, as some conservative critics suggested, because 'Spinfizz' posed a future threat to US regional security interests, particularly with respect to future US basing options in the region?

Ironically both conservative and peace movement critics of 'Spinfizz' agree in their analysis of the import of the Treaty provision which permits port visits by nuclear-armed ships. As conservative analysts Peter Samuel and Colin Rubenstein put it:

... there is little difference between stationing of nuclear weapons and allowing their transit. If nuclear weapons are an undesirable menace when stationed, then they are also an undesirable menace in transit...⁴²

⁴¹ See text of Congressional Resolution on July 15 1987 from House of Representatives, Subcommittee on East Asia. The text contains the seven State Department criteria for the acceptability of nuclear-free zones. See also Greg Fry, 'A Nuclear-Free Zone for the Southwest Pacific: Prospects and Significance', Working Paper No. 75 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, September 1983) p.32.

⁴² Peter Samuel and Colin Rubenstein, 'Australia Next?', The National Interest (Fall 1986) p.54.

Peace movement critics of 'Spinfizz' agree. But they argue that it is for this reason that nuclear ship visits should be banned in addition to the existing 'Spinfizz' ban on the stationing of nuclear weapons on the territory of state parties.⁴³ Samuel and Rubenstein, on the other hand, argue that it is the Treaty prohibition on stationing of nuclear weapons which should be dropped. Their case against the 'Spinfizz' ban on stationing nuclear weapons on the territories of Treaty states stems from a concern that there should be no barrier to Australia being a fallback base for the US if the basing facilities in the Philippines were to be lost. The opposition Liberal Party in Australia shares these concerns and has come out in support of the US rejection of the Treaty.⁴⁴

Australian supporters of 'Spinfizz' do not find the fallback basing argument persuasive primarily because the US has indicated no interest in using Australian facilities in such a contingency. The preferred US fallback positions, should Subic Bay and Clark Airbase in the Philippines become untenable, are Guam, Tinian and Saipan, none of which falls within the Zone area.

It has also been argued that signing Protocol I of 'Spinfizz' would prevent the US stationing nuclear weapons on its own territories which fall within the zone area. Although the zone does not include the strategically

⁴³ The Treaty is not, of course, legally binding until ratified.

⁴⁴ For a comprehensive statement of Liberal Party concern on this issue see Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Disarmament and Arms Control in the Nuclear Age (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986) pp.701-2

important islands of Micronesia, it does include American Samoa and Jarvis Island. However, since Administration officials have testified to Congress that the US has no contingency strategies for future deployment of nuclear weapons to either location this element of the Heritage critique is of little relevance.

The more important arguments against 'Spinfizz' have to do with the threats it allegedly poses to Western global security interests. The first of these relates to France.

The French Nuclear Test Program

It is no secret that from the beginning, a major political target of the 'Spinfizz' exercise was the much-resented French nuclear testing program at Mururoa. Australia in particular has seen 'Spinfizz' as a means of bringing further political pressure to bear on the French over the testing issue by increasing France's regional isolation.

But France is an important European ally of the US and Washington supports the French nuclear testing program. As Admiral Baker, Defense Department Director for the East Asia and Pacific region, put it to the House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Asian and Pacific Affairs:

The Free World and all those nations that wish to deter the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union benefit from the fact that there is a French testing program ... Because French testing contributes an additional level of deterrence against Soviet nuclear

capabilities the United States cannot in good conscience sign a protocol against it.⁴⁵

This is not an argument that the South Pacific Forum countries would find compelling and Admiral Baker offers no argument to show why this 'additional level of deterrence' is necessary.

Does the French nuclear force de frappe in fact require an ongoing nuclear test program? The question needs to be examined in the context of French strategic policy.

French nuclear strategy underwent a change in 1980 when, in addition to key Soviet cities, the infrastructure of the Soviet economy and administration were added to France's target list. The result is sometimes referred to as the 'enlarged anti-cities strategy'. The additional targeting requirements of the new strategy provided a rationale for strategic nuclear warhead 'modernisation' - and hence an ongoing nuclear test program. The new strategy faces something of a contradiction, however. The nuclear force imbalance between France and the Soviet Union is so great that it would be suicidal for the French to strike at the Soviets without first being attacked. On the other hand very few French strategic systems and so little of France's C3I infrastructure would survive a Soviet first strike. (France has less than 150 strategic delivery systems.⁴⁶) This means that the most that the French could hope to achieve by way of retaliation would be the

⁴⁵ Cited in Arms Control Reporter No.7 (1987) p. 456.B.68-9.

⁴⁶ These include the Mirage IVA and IVP aircraft and the S-3, M-20 and M-4 missiles. The numbers of these and other systems are likely to increase considerably over the next five years - possibly to some 600.

destruction of a number of Soviet cities. The capability to achieve this goal already exists, however, and does not require an ongoing nuclear warhead test program to maintain it. (There may well be arguments in favour of enhancing the survivability of nuclear delivery systems, but the French test program in the Pacific has little if anything to do with delivery system improvements.)

France also has a tactical nuclear weapons program. But, as with their strategic nuclear program, the French lack an across-the-board tactical nuclear warfighting capability comparable to either of the superpowers. This means that French tactical nuclear weapons can only really be used as 'warning shots', to provide 'flexibility' and/or to provide 'linkage' to France's strategic weapons. French tactical nuclear weapons currently deployed are already able to perform such missions - which relate primarily to deterrence. Defenders of the test program at Mururoa have not shown why ongoing nuclear tests are necessary to a tactical nuclear weapons deployment strategy which has the missions noted above.⁴⁷

The argument that tests are needed to ascertain the reliability of nuclear stockpiles is also questionable. In the US two recent scientific reports have cast doubt on the need for 'reliability' tests for nuclear weapons.⁴⁸ These reports demonstrate that modern nuclear weapons are in

⁴⁷ For a detailed discussion of French targeting policy see David S. Yost, 'French Nuclear Targeting' in Desmond Ball and Jeffrey Richelson (eds) Strategic Nuclear Targeting (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1986).

⁴⁸ See 'Nuclear Weapons Tests and the Role of the University of California/Department of Energy Laboratories', a Report to the President and Regents of the University of California by the Scientific and Academic

fact very robust, that they no longer suffer from reliability problems, and hence do not need reliability testing. Moreover a degree of uncertainty about stockpile reliability is of little consequence with respect to deterrence. Even if France could not be certain that all its weapons would work as intended, the Soviets could not be certain that they would not, so whatever deterrent effect French nuclear threats had would be preserved.

Furthermore, even if the claim that French nuclear testing contributes to global security is accepted, it does not follow that the tests have to be carried out in the South Pacific. In response to concerns expressed about the danger of their nuclear tests, the French invariably assert that the nuclear program is perfectly safe. If this is true there seems no good reason why the tests should not, as Australia has frequently suggested, '... be conducted in the home territory of the metropolitan power.'⁴⁹

This is not the only alternative. France has reportedly been offered the use of US nuclear test facilities on several occasions over the past few years.⁵⁰ There is an obvious precedent for such a move. The British, who also have an 'independent deterrent' and who also used to test nuclear weapons in the Pacific, now test them in the US.

Advisory Committee, July 1987 and Robert Scheer, 'Continued Testing Not Necessary, Study Says' Los Angeles Times (September 20, 1987).

⁴⁹ Ambassador F. Rawdon Dalrymple, 'Australia and the South Pacific: the Treaty of Rarotonga', speech delivered to the World Affairs Council, Washington D.C. November 12, 1986. p.6.

⁵⁰ See 'US Offers France Nuclear Test Site', Age (March 23 1987). The original report came from Michael Richardson of the International Herald Tribune. French officials reportedly denied that the offers had been made.

From the viewpoint of the South Pacific Forum states no French case for nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific appears persuasive.

The 'Nuclear Allergy'

There has, however, been a more important determinant of US opposition to 'Spinfizz' than Washington's reluctance to embarrass France - namely the concern to stop the spread of the 'nuclear allergy' to regions where, unlike the South Pacific, the US does have vital security interests. Like New Zealand's nuclear ship ban, 'Spinfizz' was seen as a creating a potentially dangerous precedent.

The logic of the US position is straightforward. The provisions of the South Pacific Treaty might not constrain any current US military operations, but new zones in other regions could do so. And since the US is a maritime power, while the Soviet Union is essentially a land power, the spread of nuclear-free zones encompassing large maritime areas will tend to disadvantage the US more than it does the Soviets.

The spread of nuclear-free zones is also seen as encouraging anti-nuclearist tendencies in a more general way. Such tendencies undermine alliance solidarity and the global system of nuclear deterrence on which the US and its allies rely for their security. According to State Department spokesperson, Charles Redman, 'A proliferation of such zones in

the free world ... is clearly detrimental to Western security.'⁵¹ Redman also stressed that the US decision to reject the treaty was based on global, not regional, considerations.⁵²

In other words Administration officials believed that the threat to US global interests which the Treaty allegedly posed were serious enough to warrant a refusal to sign the Treaty even though they knew that this would generate considerable resentment within the region.

'Nuclear Allergy' and Deterrence

Although activist peace movements are presently in relative decline throughout most of the OECD countries, the 'nuclear allergy' persists, albeit in different forms:

- * at the popular level it is reflected in the very high level of public support for arms control - support which many conservatives believe is naive and misguided. The other side of the coin is the ongoing public opposition to US bases in various countries around the world - in particular Spain, Greece and the Philippines;

⁵¹ Quoted in Edmund F. Scherr, 'US Won't Sign South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Pact', United States Information Service (February 5 1987). American policy on Nuclear-Free Zones (NFZ) is somewhat selective. The US regularly votes in favour of the resolutions on NFZ for the Middle East and South Asia at the UN General Assembly. It appears that the major US objections to NFZs may be to those which cover maritime areas.

⁵² Ibid.

* within the security studies community it is evident in concern about particular manifestations of the 'strategic modernisation' programs of both superpowers, and enthusiasm for a wide range of specific confidence-building and arms control measures;

* at the level of party politics it is visible in the opposition to current NATO nuclear policies which is increasingly characteristic of north European Social Democratic parties - particularly the German SPD and the British Labour Party. The most extreme manifestation of this disaffection outside the New Zealand Labour Party is found in Canada's New Democratic Party.

But does 'nuclear allergy' in fact undermine deterrence and encourage Soviet expansionism as the US suggests? The evidence is by no means persuasive. The period in which manifestations of 'nuclear allergy' have been most obvious - the 1980s - has not seen an upsurge of adventurist Soviet expansionism in the Third World, or any increased Soviet willingness to challenge the US or its allies militarily. On the contrary, notwithstanding some important recent diplomatic initiatives from Gorbachev, the period has generally been one of Soviet quietism and retrenchment throughout much of the Third World, and of Soviet conciliation on the arms control front.

Neither the quietism, nor the new Soviet enthusiasm for arms control, should be seen as evidence of a new benevolence in Soviet foreign and security policies. Rather, they are a response to growing economic

constraints at home and the failure of many aspects of Soviet policy abroad. Since both of the latter are likely to be enduring features of Moscow's domestic and foreign policy experience we may expect both the relative quietism and the enthusiasm for arms control to persist for some time.

The problem with the argument which identifies 'nuclear allergy' as a threat to Western security is that it assumes what has to be demonstrated - namely that deterrence is fragile and thus likely to be eroded by agreements like 'Spinfizz'. Yet the evidence simply does not support such a contention. Deterrence is anything but fragile; indeed it is extraordinarily robust. Since the Cuban missile crisis both superpowers, notwithstanding their hostile and sometimes provocative rhetoric, have gone to considerable lengths to avoid confrontations which could lead to armed conflict between them.

Some analysts concede that a direct Soviet military assault against the US or its allies is highly improbable, but argue that the real danger arises from growing Western accommodation to Soviet designs as confidence in the solidarity of Western alliance structures declines and Soviet military power continues to grow. As this process continues the risk grows that Western governments will succumb to 'Finlandisation' - or its milder variant, 'Hollanditis'. 'Finlandisation' enables the Soviets to gain tactical advantage without firing a shot.⁵³

⁵³ It is interesting that Finland should be depicted as a country which has capitulated to Soviet pressure, since it could equally be seen as exemplifying an extraordinarily successful history of resisting it.

The 'Finlandisation'/'Hollanditis' thesis is not implausible but neither is it supported by much evidence. First, 'Hollanditis' - itself a manifestation of 'nuclear allergy' - has been primarily a response to US nuclear programs, not those of the USSR. Second, where OECD countries have become concerned about particular Soviet military policies their reaction has been anything but accommodating. Japan, for example, has responded to the Soviet military build-up in the disputed Northern Territories by increasing its defence expenditure and growing closer militarily to the US - a response quite the reverse of that predicted by the 'Finlandisation' theorists. There are many other such examples.

In the view of most strategic analysts the primary risk of nuclear war between the superpowers derives not from an unprovoked act of aggression, which could serve no rational purpose, but from inadvertence - from a crisis getting out of hand and drawing the superpowers into the confrontation they have so long sought to avoid. If this argument is accepted - and it is very much part of the conventional wisdom of the strategic community - then what is most needed to enhance security is not a greater emphasis on bolstering deterrence, but greater attention paid to policies designed to enhance crisis avoidance, crisis stability, tension-reduction and confidence-building.

Finally, it is not at all clear that 'nuclear allergy' arises primarily from a 'contagion' effect, it may equally be seen as a series of relatively autonomous responses to common concerns about the direction of superpower

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nuclear policies. Insofar as this is true then both the peace movement's hopes and Reagan Administration fears about the demonstration effects of 'Spinfizz' and the 'Kiwi Disease' may be misplaced, and attempting to quell the manifestations of the 'allergy' in one region will not necessarily prevent its emergence in others.

If, as is arguably true in the New Zealand and 'Spinfizz' cases, 'contagion' was not a major determinant of the 'nuclear allergy', and if the highly negative US response to the symptoms of the 'allergy' is ineffective or even counterproductive, then the US may have damaged its interests in the South Pacific without furthering them at the global level.

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