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KEEPERS OF THE SECURITY
The Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Arms Control Formulation, 1968-1992

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Introduction: Insiders or Insignificant?

“We must severely cripple and thereby neutralize China’s capacity to wage aggressive war.”¹ General Douglas MacArthur’s forceful public statement on United States policy signaled a clear escalation in the Korean War.² However, the general’s statement was inconsistent with the views of his commander-in-chief. Harry Truman was expressly against this expansion of the war. Undaunted, General McArthur continued to publicly voice his position to the media and his allies in Congress until he was finally removed by the President for insubordination.³ Clearly this military advisor was attempting to pressure the President into a policy he did not want. We find a similar difficulty with military advisors in the Vietnam conflict, when the JCS publicly opposed their lack of input in the Johnson administration’s limited escalation policy, thereby damaging the credibility of President Johnson.⁴

These examples suggest that military leaders may see themselves as having constituencies beyond the executive branch, which can give them additional influence in

¹ William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1978), p. 622.

² General MacArthur believed that he could use the Korean War to defeat the Chinese in a larger Asian war. He even went so far as to advocate this policy to foreign governments, including Spain and Portugal. See, *Korea: MacArthur's War* (New York: MPI Home Video, 1988), Videotape.

³ Richard Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 19.

attempting to craft administration policy. This potential influence, when compounded with the perception that the military are universally more conservative in their policy advice than other advisors, would suggest that a significant conservative bias is influencing United States defense policy. This study examines whether this is true in one area of defense policy – arms control. By investigating the SALT (both I and II), START, INF, and CFE agreements, I will explore the role of military advice in the formulation of major arms control agreements during the Cold War.

According to the National Security Act of 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) are the principal military advisors to the President, Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council (NSC). In this capacity, the JCS typically provides advice on the development and deployment of arms in the national defense. And in such areas, it is often assumed that there is something unique and inherently valuable concerning the advice of people who have spent their entire life in defense of the nation.⁵ However, this study finds that that assumption is not entirely accurate. And while the role of the JCS in national defense policies has received some attention from such scholars as Richard Betts, Lawrence Korb, and David Tarr, the advisory role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the arms control process has gone virtually unnoticed.⁶

⁴ H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), pp. 208-210.

⁵ Jeffrey S. McKittrick, "Arms Control and the Joint Chiefs of Staff," *Parameters: Journal of the U.S. Army War College*, Vol. 14 (no. 3) 1984, p. 64.

⁶ Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises*; Lawrence Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); David Tarr, "New Military Missions and Civil-Military Decision Making," Paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, Chicago, Illinois, 18-20 April 1996.

Factors in JCS Participation

Certainly the Joint Chiefs of Staff are believed to be significant actors in the arms control process. There are some organizational advantages that their institutional position as the president's premier military advisors affords them. However, this would be an overly-simplistic understanding of how the JCS affects the process. By understanding personal factors between policy makers and the contextual factors, which affect nearly every actor in the process, we gain a more realistic understanding of the factors affecting JCS participation.

A. Institutional Factors

Given the institutional advantages that the JCS bring to the issue, one would expect significant participation by the JCS in the formulation of arms control treaties. This is for several reasons. First, though the chairman is the principal military advisor to the president, the president does not have complete freedom of choice in selecting this advisor. The CJCS must be a senior-ranking military officer, and this limits the president's choice to a relatively small group of like-minded individuals. Further, he may not get to choose at all, since often the term of JCS members will overlap administrations. For instance, in the first year of the Reagan administration, General David Jones, a Carter administration appointee, served as Reagan's JCS Chairman.

But the greatest institutional advantage that the JCS brings to arms control formulation is their power in the ratification process. The Chiefs are often viewed by the Senate as an "honest broker" within the executive branch and are always given ample opportunity to testify. Indeed, some scholars note that the Senate has never ratified an

arms control agreement that the JCS has actively opposed, and that the JCS has used this to leverage other executive branch elements in the formulation process.⁷ Indeed, the military's desire to see the SALT I agreements codified in a treaty, vice an executive agreement (which would not require Senate ratification), is suggestive in light of this connection.⁸

B. Personal Factors

However, despite these institutional advantages, the Joint Chiefs seem not to have played a significant role in some of the prominent arms control discussions with the Soviet Union, such as the Reykjavik summit in 1986. Here, President Reagan tentatively agreed to a proposal by General Secretary Gorbachev to eliminate all ballistic missiles within a ten-year period. Admiral Crowe, the Joint Chiefs Chairman, had not been consulted on the issue and decried both the lack of consultation, as well as the merits of the agreement. This case highlights that institutional advantages do not always empower the JCS Chairman – exceptions to the rule are possible. So, despite the fact that institutional factors tend to empower the JCS, they do not provide a complete explanation of JCS participation in arms control formulation.

⁷ Paul Stockton, "New Game on the Hill: The Politics of Arms Control and Strategic Force Modernization," *International Security*, vol. 16, no. 2 (Fall 1991), pp. 146-70. See also, Robert J. Bresler and Robert C. Gray, "The Bargaining Chip and SALT," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 92, no. 1 (Spring 1977), pp. 65-89.

⁸ Memorandum, 19 January 1967, "Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara (JCSM-30-67)," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Arms Control* (Washington: Department of State, 1997), pp. 426-428.

Personal characteristics of the JCS Chairman and his relationship with his superiors in the National Command Authority (NCA),⁹ particularly the Secretary of Defense, may have a more immediate impact on JCS influence in the policy process. Certainly the literature on perceptions and beliefs has long recognized that personal factors are important explanatory variables in understanding policy outcomes. Interpersonal skills have also long been recognized as important for other foreign policy actors in such areas as bargaining theory.

Janowitz was one of the first to suggest that the personality and values of general officers influenced their careers and policy orientations. In his work, *The Professional Soldier*, he discusses the different policy orientations of two types of general officers -- the absolutists and the pragmatists. The absolutists, such as Douglas McArthur, relied primarily on military considerations and saw foreign affairs issues, like the Cold War, in black and white terms. As a result, the absolutists were more inclined to embrace the possibility of escalating conflicts with the Soviet Union to the level of total war (e.g., the "Massive Retaliation" policy). The pragmatists, such as George Marshall, took a more balanced view by incorporating political considerations into their policy advice. These advisors stressed the political nature of warfare and were more inclined to favor a doctrine of limited war.

Betts extended Janowitz's contention that the personal values of military advisors can impact on their policy advice. Exploring the differences between civilian and military advisors, he concludes that the military has been neither more nor less aggressive than the civilian advisors on recommendations to use force in specific situations.

⁹ The National Command Authority consists of the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense.

However, once the decision to use force is made, Betts argued that military advisors are typically more inclined to escalate the conflict.¹⁰ He also noted inter-service variations, such as a more aggressive policy orientation of Air Force and Navy officials as contrasted with their counterparts in the Army.

The relationship of the Chairman to the Secretary of Defense and the President can also impact the quality of military advice as Jeffrey McKittrick has pointed out. Examining the broad strategies that the Joint Chiefs can employ in the arms control formulation process, he concluded that the influence of the JCS is largely dependent on their personal relationships with the President and the Secretary of Defense.¹¹ In fact, this is a sentiment echoed by several military scholars concerning military advice to the Chief Executive, generally.¹²

The quality of the JCS relationship with other interagency actors, but particularly the Secretary of Defense, can have either a positive or negative impact. As Richard Burt noted, Defense Secretary McNamara inhibited JCS advice on the Limited Test Ban (LTB) treaty and the Johnson administration's position on SALT I.¹³ For instance, during the LTB negotiations in Moscow, McNamara did not utilize JCS advice. Indeed, the JCS did not even have their own representative – Assistant Secretary of Defense John

¹⁰Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises*, pp. 209-11.

¹¹McKittrick, "Arms Control and the JCS," pp. 431-52.

¹²See, *Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in National Policy* (Roundtable, 2 August 1978, Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research) John Charles Daly, Moderator; *The Evolving Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the National Security Structure* (Washington: Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 7 July 1977); John McCarthy, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff -- An Effective System for Providing Military Advice* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, September 1975). The contention that the advisory system is designed by the President is consistent with the political science literature on this subject. See Alexander George, *Presidential Decision Making* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980).

¹³Richard Burt, "A Glass Half Empty," *Foreign Policy*, 36 (Fall 1979), p. 42.

McNaughton spoke for everyone at the Pentagon.¹⁴ This study gives particular attention to the relationship of the JCS Chairman and the Defense Secretary as an explanatory variable in understanding JCS participation.

C. Contextual Factors

Contextual factors, too, influence the policy prescriptions of military advisors. As Korb suggests, political leaders set a framework in which the Joint Chiefs operate. The JCS, he argues, is frequently intimidated by political leaders into supporting policies with which they do not agree. The Chiefs, he concluded, were “not innovators in the policy process” and were typically “addicted to the status quo.”¹⁵ Interagency negotiations within the executive branch on arms control formulation, according to Rathjens, Chayes and Ruina, also take considerable amounts of time and effort in order to overcome bureaucratic standoffs and adjudicate internal disputes. This process results in a form of “logrolling” between the various participants.¹⁶ Not only is internal governmental bargaining relevant, but so too are such factors as the role of public opinion and electoral politics. As Miller suggests, prospects for successful arms control would be dependent on finding ways to manage the political process in order to isolate these extraneous political debates.¹⁷

These broader contextual factors, while important, complicate any analysis of JCS participation. However, by limiting the analysis to the formulation stage, I am able to

¹⁴ Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises*, p. 113.

¹⁵ Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff*, pp. 180-1.

¹⁶ George Rathjens, Abram Chayes, and Jack Ruina, *Nuclear Arms Control Agreements: Process and Impact* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1974), pp. 15-17.

¹⁷ Steven Miller, “Politics Over Promise: Domestic Impediments to Arms Control,”

minimize the influence of political factors such as public opinion, electoral politics, and lobbying from outside the Executive branch. But minimal influence does not mean no influence – only that they are less influential in the formulation process than in the ratification stage. My choice of cases, moreover, is restricted to the later stages of the Cold War period, when there was a general consensus, in the government as well as the broader political arena, that arms control was one avenue towards reducing East-West tensions. Certainly, this attempt to minimize the influences of context is not a perfect solution. Still, by exploring cases which share some of the same contextual factors and minimizes the impact of others, I am able to focus on the internal dynamics of the interagency process and the military role within that process. Even with these contextual constraints on my study, it is clear that the influence of the Joint Chiefs varied from case to case. My goal is to delineate the relative influence of organizational and personal factors to these processes in each case.

Cases

With this extensive coverage of a variety of agreements, this study is attempting to make credible assertions about the military's role in arms control policy formulation by an extensive and systematic investigation of several agreements. It is also attempting to uncover the major factors which contribute to any variations between agreements. Indeed, the use of the comparative case study approach has provided the wisest course for understanding the JCS Chairman's role in the arms control process. With the ability to explore the internal dynamics of each agreement, it has been easier to identify and test competing explanations on why the Chairman's involvement and strategy varied from

International Security, vol. 8, no. 9 (Spring 1984), pp. 67-90.

case to case.

However, the five cases were selected not only for their similarities in context, but also for their variation in weapons type. This study seeks to explore whether the type of weapon being negotiated makes a difference. In the arena of strategic arms, both the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I and II) and the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty are discussed. Given the “extra-military” value of strategic nuclear arms, this allows an exploration of the most politically-prominent form of arms control. But by comparing these cases with other prominent, and militarily relevant, treaties such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces and the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe treaties, I can also explore whether the type of weapons being negotiated impacts the process. For instance, the employment of nuclear weapons is largely a theoretical issue – the military does not have the monopoly on nuclear weapons expertise. But they have significant experience in employing, and are the resident experts on, conventional arms. This study seeks to find whether that translates into additional influence in the interagency process.

Structure of the Cases

For the five cases employed in this study, I employ the same basic outline in order to be more systematic in my investigation. First, because many of these arms control agreements span multiple presidencies, the cases are subdivided by administration. Within these sub-divisions, there are three basic elements – an introduction to the personal orientations of the major policy actors, a description of the organizational framework in which they operated, and a narrative of how the formulation process

operated. After the investigation of the relevant administrations is completed, an analysis section discusses the overall trends and conclusions which can be gleaned from the particular case.

Beyond any introductory comments, I explore the personal factors by analyzing the background and beliefs of the major policy actors in the arms control formulation process. This typically includes the President, the JCS Chairman, the National Security Advisor, and the Secretaries of Defense and State. This provides a basic orientation as to how the primary actors in the interagency framework viewed arms control formulation and their role within the process.

To set the organizational context for each case, I also analyze the interagency structures relevant to the arms control process. After all, if the military is not physically present when arms control positions are being decided, the quality of their involvement is minimized. Therefore, it is important that this study begin by exploring the extent to which the JCS chairman was present in the senior arms control forums which established U.S. negotiating positions on arms control. The participation of the chairman in the lower level arms control groups, as well as his membership in informal or ad hoc groups in the executive branch will also be explored.

Understanding the organizational context of the lower-level arms control groups is also important to understanding the chairman's role in the formulation process. Policies which are later ratified and implemented by senior-level decision-makers are often the creation of a lower-level official or working group. Thus, the exclusion of the chairman or his representative here could be important. For instance, as John Newhouse noted in his work *Cold Dawn*, the entire JCS was initially excluded from the first SALT

interagency group in late 1966. This was done at the behest of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara who doubted that the Chiefs would support such an endeavor.¹⁸ Regardless of the validity of McNamara's doubts, his actions served to limit JCS participation in the initial attempts to fashion a SALT proposal.

A study of the organizational context of arms control formulation would be incomplete without also detailing the use and involvement of informal or ad hoc groups in the executive branch related to arms control. These are often created in order to promote efficiency in the formulation process and can sometimes function in lieu of the formal apparatus. Informal groups are defined as those not established by national security directives from the president and are often critical in understanding executive policy-making in any area. One need only look to the fact that presidents have often turned to ad hoc groupings for critical policy advice (The most frequently cited example is President Kennedy's reliance on the EXCOMM in the Cuban Missile Crisis). In the area of arms control, informal groups can also be critical – former Assistant Secretary of Defense Stephen Hadley noted the critical importance of an ad hoc known as the “Ungroup.” This body was created to study START issues at the request of President Bush.¹⁹ At its zenith, this group not only advised the president and top policy advisors on arms control issues, but also served as an “on-site think tank” to the negotiating delegation in Geneva.

Organizational structure, of course, only gives the JCS chairman the option of participating in the delineation of political alternatives. By combining the organizational

¹⁸ John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973), p. 87.

¹⁹ Telephone interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Stephen Hadley, 17 November 1997.

structure with the personal interaction of the president and his advisors, a more complete picture of military participation is obtained. To explore this aspect of the chairman's participation, I engage in an in-depth examination of the major agenda items for the JCS in each agreement. This will be compared with the final arms control position of the U.S. government. In particular, by tracing how the military fared in shaping the final negotiating position presented to the Soviets we can understand both the quantity and quality of military participation in arms control formulation.

From an examination of the actors, the organization, and the JCS role in the formulation of policy I can draw both general and specific conclusions concerning JCS participation in arms limitation agreements. In general terms, I can assess the role that the JCS Chairman played in the process and delineate the major influences on his participation. Factors such as their ideological consistency with other policy leaders and their inclusion in interagency structures will be discussed here. But because I am employing a comparative case study approach, there are also more specific issues which can be explored by this study. In particular, the impact of how organizational reforms and the personal characteristics of the JCS Chairman affect any variation in JCS participation in the formulation of arms control.

Changes in organizational structures permit us to see how different organizational factors impact the process. The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, for example, was designed to improve the efficiency of the Joint Chiefs by centralizing authority in a stronger chairman. The hope was that this would increase the effectiveness of JCS advice relative to other advisors by improving the timeliness of their counsel. In

addition to making the Joint Staff formally responsible to the Chairman, the Chairman was designated as the sole “principal military advisor” to the President.

David Tarr, in a subsequent study, argues that the reforms increased the influence of the chairman. But Tarr also suggests that they also made him especially vulnerable to the “political sirens” of the policymaking process whenever the issue of politico-military operations arise.²⁰ However, what impact these reforms may have had on the arms control process has not been seriously considered before now. Prior to the Goldwater-Nichols reforms, James Dougherty speculated that the chairman would be more powerful.

The Chairman, speaking with the unified voice for the entire military establishment, might alter the trends of the past quarter century and wield a significantly greater influence over the President, the OSD, the NSC, and Congress -- an influence reflecting the natural conservatism and skepticism of the military vis-à-vis arms control.²¹

To test the findings of Dougherty and Tarr, this study compares the activity and involvement of General Jack Vessey, Admiral William Crowe and General Colin Powell -- the chairmen before and after the 1986 reforms. The logic driving this analysis is that the organizational reforms gave more unity to the JCS, and hence more power to its chairman. This may have increased his involvement in the process, and as a result, perhaps elevated his level of influence relative to other participants in the arms control process.

However, I find that the Goldwater-Nichols reforms were less effective than was hoped. The reforms did not significantly alter JCS participation in the interagency process, either substantively or procedurally. What they did do was provide the JCS

²⁰Tarr, “New Military Missions,” p 18.

²¹James Dougherty, *JCS Reorganization and U.S. Arms Control Policy* (Washington: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., 1986), p. xi.

Chairman with more latitude in guiding policy advice within the JCS. As a result, the Goldwater-Nichols reforms appear to have solidified the position of the chairman within the JCS, more than they changed the interagency role of the Chiefs.

Additionally, I find that personal factors appear to often spell the difference between success and failure in JCS attempts to influence policy. This study clarifies the discussion of personal relations by contending that it is ideological affinity, not amicable relations with the superiors, that is significant. This is particularly true when comparing the ideological orientation of the JCS Chairman with the Secretary of Defense. What is more, the political skill of the chairman, can also lead to the adoption of JCS policy proposals even when amicable relations and ideological affinity are lacking.

To systematize my investigation of personal factors along these lines, I shall use the categories suggested by Betts. As he notes, there are three different types of military advisors: (1) Professionals, who give military advice based only on strategic security considerations; (2) Organization Men, who have little interest in politics, instead preferring to keep a low profile and advocate the perspectives of their services; and (3) Bureaucratic Manipulators, who take advantage of opportunities to increase their access and involvement in policy making. Betts also notes that examples of aggressive and cautious advice can be found in each of these categories. From this, Betts concludes that most military leaders are "organization men" and that most leaders are willingly subservient to their administration.²² His study only examines military leaders up through the early 1970's and does not give a specific examination of JCS impact in the arms control process.

This study assesses the leadership type of each JCS Chairman from 1968 to 1992

through a three-fold examination. First, as a preview of the chairman's style, previous staff assignments of the JCS chairman will be considered. It is assumed for this study that a higher proportion of staff assignments for the JCS Chairman as he rose through the ranks would predispose him towards a more bureaucratic perspective. Second, I shall make my own observations of the behavior of the JCS Chairman during the arms control formulation processes in this study. Finally, as a way to verify my analysis, evaluations by the chairman's peers were solicited in the interviews. In this way, a variety of measurements contribute to an assessment of the chairman's leadership style.

I conclude that most effective style for JCS chairmen is the bureaucratic manipulator model. The chairmen who fit this model, Earl Wheeler, David Jones, William Crowe, and Colin Powell, demonstrated some degree of success in achieving their policy prescriptions. This is not to contend that the others were unsuccessful. Organization men, in particular, were able to gain side payments from the government. For instance, while Admiral Thomas Moorer objected to many of the provisions in SALT I, he endorsed the treaty due to assurances by the president that certain defense procurement programs would be accelerated.

Sources

My study draws on many different sources in order to explore the role of the JCS chairman. Determining the structure and composition of the NSC and senior-level arms control forums is easily accomplished. Primary source documentation obtained from the Reagan, Carter, Nixon, and Johnson presidential libraries, as well as books on the various agreements, are more than adequate for the task. Information has also been obtained from

²²Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises*, p. 181.

the National Security Archives, a private non-governmental agency which advertises itself as the largest repository of Freedom of Information Acts (FOIA) requests. For instance, the negotiating instructions for several of the later rounds of the Nuclear and Space Talks (NST) were found through this source. The structure and processes of the lower-level forums provide more of a challenge since many books on arms control issues give little detail on the membership of many of these bodies, instead focusing on the senior-level policy makers. Yet, primary source documentation, combined with elite interviews, allows for a sufficient accounting of these groups. Documenting ad hoc advisory groups is done in a fashion similar to the lower-level forums, though with a greater emphasis on the interviews due to their first-hand accounts of the membership and functions of these organizations. For instance, the discussion of the “Ungroup” in the Bush administration is derived primarily from my interviews with Lieutenant General Howard Graves, Stephen Hadley, James Woolsey, and Arnold Kanter – all participants in that group.

Descriptions of the quality of JCS participation, as well as evidence on why this quality might vary, are found in numerous open source materials. Numerous biographical accounts by former senior officials provide an overview of that administration’s work on arms control, albeit from only one participant’s perspective. For example, the memoirs of Zbigniew Brzezinski illustrate that he believed the JCS lacked power in the formulation process. He noted, “[Carter] would meet with the JCS in order to solicit support, to reduce their concerns, and *to give them a sense of genuine participation* in the shaping and refining of our proposals (emphasis mine).”²³ Another example is seen Admiral

²³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Stratus, and Giroux, 1985), p. 166.

William Crowe's biography, where he saw a significant role for the JCS in the Reagan administration by checking a popular rush to arms control in the wake of the INF accord. In particular, he credits the JCS with forestalling an attempt by the Reagan administration to push for the conclusion of the START I accord in 1988 – a move he believed was politically-motivated and ill-considered.²⁴ Finally, the use of journal and media sources provides amplifying information on events and activities that may have been overlooked by the bibliographic accounts.

But to supplement this, I have employed an elite interview project to see how the various chiefs, their aides, and other executive branch advisors evaluate their own influence on the process. My interview schedule and list of interviewees is attached to the bibliography, below. The interviews were conducted with thirty-five prominent policy makers, covering all of the agreements under study. As a matter of course, this study attempted to interview senior-level policy makers, particularly former members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Of the thirty-five interviews, seventeen were military professionals attached to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including three former JCS chairmen. Also included are nine individuals from the State and Defense Departments ranging from the level of Cabinet Secretary to Assistant Secretary. In each case study, a minimum of one JCS member was interviewed. However, lower level officials and staff members involved in the process have also been interviewed for each case. In fact, the latter were actually more likely to have been involved in the details of the work. For instance, many more details on the lower level and informal groups were given by military staff members

²⁴ William Crowe, *The Line of Fire: From Washington to the Gulf, the Politics and Battles of the New Military* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), p. 178.

serving the JCS, than the JCS members themselves. Dexter notes a similar pattern when he states:

There is a tendency. . . by social scientists, to assume that the head of an organization is ipso facto a good informant. This is simply not so; the governor's appointment secretary probably knows far more clearly how the office runs and who wants to see him than does the governor; someone far down the budget bureau probably has a better picture of what the budget means and how it was put together.²⁵

The sources that are employed for each case study vary due to problems related to information availability. The length of time that has passed since an agreement is a good indicator of how much primary source documentation and bibliographic sources are available. With this in mind, it should be understood that while this entire study relies on the sources mentioned, chapters on the most recent agreements put a much higher emphasis on elite interviews in order to off-set the paucity of written material that is available. For instance, the SALT I case study relies on four elite interviews, while the CFE study relies on twelve.

Conclusions

This study finds that the JCS, via their chairman, are relevant actors in arms control formulation. They were included in all formal – and most informal – interagency groupings. They were also given the opportunity to present their views, even if the final administration position did not always reflect those views. And contrary to my initial hypothesis, it is found that the type of weapon being negotiated appears to make little difference in the process. Beyond this, I find that organization matters – the impact of the Goldwater-Nichols reforms makes this clear. However, the act was not significant in the

²⁵Lewis Anthony Dexter, *Elite and Specialized Interviewing* (Evanston: Northwest

way that Dougherty predicted. Also, while organization is important, personal factors enrich our understanding of which chairman will succeed and which will fail. In particular the political skill of the JCS Chairman and his ideological affinity with the Defense Secretary are important factors. Finally, while contextual factors were relevant to the interagency process during this time-period, they impacted all of the actors equally. Hence, there was no unique impact on JCS advice from contextual factors.

In the end, I find that military advice is not always the most conservative view in the interagency process. Quite often they were a moderating influence on the arms control process. And while they were involved in the politics of the interagency process, they did not typically attempt political end-runs around the administration by energizing their allies outside of the executive branch.

University Press, 1970), p. 76.

Chapter 2

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks I

Introduction:

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks¹ (SALT I) was the first comprehensive treaty to limit the numbers of strategic nuclear arms. In fact, the treaty actually contained two agreements – one limiting strategic offensive arms and one limiting anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems. Given the fact that this treaty was something of a first in U.S.-Soviet relations, this was a very prominent issue in a military sense.

What we find in this section is that the Joint Chiefs, after some initial conflict within the Department of Defense (DOD), were integrated in the formal processes of both the Johnson and Nixon administrations. And while they did not prevail on the national security bureaucracy on every issue, they were significant actors in the process. However, this involvement appeared to be precipitated more by their expected utility in the ratification process, as opposed to any genuine desire by the administrations for military advice.

A second conclusion is that formal participation in the interagency process may be effectively eviscerated by ad hoc forums which circumvent the formal process. Henry Kissinger's use of the "Backchannel" kept most of the interagency process, including the

¹ The strategic arms negotiations did not have a title until August 1968. Robert Martin, a specialist in the State Department's Bureau of Political and Military Affairs, suggested the title. See, John Prados, *Keeper of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), p. 194.

Joint Chiefs, out of the loop. The Chiefs were rewarded for their support in the Senate -- without JCS support in the ratification process, any administration arms control proposal would face extreme difficulties.² However, side payments are not the same thing as influencing arms control policy formulation.

Johnson Administration:

Lyndon Johnson had been pushing for arms control discussions with the Soviets for most of his administration. The development of anti-ballistic missile (ABM) technology, as well as the ongoing arms race were increasingly important issues to Johnson late in his administration. By 1967, he noted in his memoirs, "It was time, if not past time, for mature men to take stock together on how to achieve mutual security without the huge added costs of elaborate protective systems and expanded offensive systems they would trigger into being."³ And while the United States and the Soviet Union had signed several multilateral arms control agreements, such as the Outerspace Treaty, the Seabed Treaty, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, discussion on limiting strategic arms had eluded Johnson.

On 1 July 1968, at the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Johnson announced that the Soviets had formally agreed to start strategic arms limitation talks for

² Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), p. 128. Indeed, Kissinger originally considered utilizing the SALT position created during the Johnson administration because the JCS had already endorsed it. However, he discarded the proposal when he believed that the Soviets would not accept the offer.

³ Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), p. 479.

both offensive and defensive systems “in the nearest future.”⁴ He was very interested in progress on these issues. At one point he remarked to Clark Clifford that an arms limitation summit “could be the greatest accomplishment of my Administration.”⁵ Leaving office in six months, LBJ had to create a negotiating position as quickly as possible.

I. The Actors

In creating this proposal, Johnson wanted the SALT position to reflect the concerns of the bureaucracy. Johnson preferred to delegate tasks to advisors with whom he was impressed and who he could trust, such as Secretary of State Dean Rusk. As a result, neither Johnson nor the White House staff took an active role in the creation of the initial SALT proposal.⁶

General Earl “Bus” Wheeler served as JCS Chairman from July 1964 to July 1970. Noted by some as a “political general,” Wheeler was an adept and experienced staff officer who had not worked his way to the top through the traditional route of operational command billets.⁷ Up through World War II, Wheeler spent most of his career training Army personnel, including a tour as a mathematics instructor at West

⁴ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 192.

⁵ Clark Clifford, *Counsel to the President: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1991), p. 559.

⁶ Jerel Rosati, “Developing a Systematic Decision-Making Framework: Bureaucratic Politics in Perspective,” *World Politics* vol. 33, no. 2 (1981). Also, Thomas Wolfe, *The SALT Experience* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger, 1979), p. 25.

⁷ See Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), pp. 325-326. Also, H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Collins Press, 1997), pp. 108-110.

Point.⁸ After the war, Wheeler served in a number of joint staff assignments. While serving in the Army Staff's Operations Directorate in 1958, he headed a commission on improving joint service planning and operations. He also had numerous other joint service assignments such as Director of the Joint Staff and Army Chief of Staff. This previous staff experience and service in Washington assisted him in understanding the political nature of his position. As one observer noted, "unlike a high-ranking officer coming to Washington for the first time, Chairman Wheeler was sensitive to and familiar with the political machinations of the Pentagon, the White House and Capitol Hill."⁹

Given his knowledge of the Washington environment, Wheeler used his political skills both to solidify JCS support for administration policies and to defend JCS interests before the administration. When he became Chairman, Wheeler believed one of his missions was to broker between the conflicting viewpoints of civilian and military officials. Indeed, some credit General Wheeler with persuading the Joint Chiefs to support arms control in spite of their initial belief that this was not beneficial to the nation's security.¹⁰ Newhouse describes General Wheeler as "a reasonable man who was aware of his duty to meet the President at least halfway."¹¹

At the same time, Wheeler also took steps to make the JCS more effective in the process. One of his primary goals within the JCS was unanimity in JCS

⁸ Willard Webb and Ronald Cole, *The Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington: Historical Division of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1989), pp. 73-74.

⁹ Douglas Kinnard, *The Secretary of Defense* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1980), p. 79.

¹⁰ See Gerard Smith, *Doubletalk: The Story of the First Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* (New York: Doubleday and Company, inc.), p. 37.

¹¹ John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973), p. 113.

recommendations. By masking internal disputes, he hoped the JCS could present a stronger position before the bureaucracy and overcome opposition from certain civilian officials.¹² However, Wheeler was largely successful in achieving consensus among the Chiefs, this unanimity did not translate into greater JCS influence.¹³

In terms of his philosophy on arms control, Wheeler was inclined to see the debate largely in terms of America's military security, as contrasted to the larger issue of reducing international tensions. As a result, he was inclined to advocate arms control positions which would preserve or enhance U.S. military capabilities relative to the Soviet Union.

By contrast, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was an extremely forceful advocate for arms control as a method to reduce superpower tensions.¹⁴ As one of the first proponents of "deterrence," he believed that nuclear weapons could be used as a stabilizing factor in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Indeed, at one point, he even intimated that he approved of a Soviet strategic buildup in order to reach parity with the United States, thereby reducing the temptation for an American first strike.¹⁵ However, deterrence depended upon both sides living with a "balance of terror" – the knowledge that if either side attacked, it would be destroyed in any counterattack. It was not rational to initiate an attack, because defense was not practical. If either side

¹² This tactic was primarily designed to overcome the influence of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. See, Shapley, *Promise and Power*, pp. 325-326.

¹³ Webb and Cole, *The Chairmen of the JCS*, p. 75.

¹⁴ Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1990), p. 349.

¹⁵ In a 1961 interview, when asked about when the Soviets might have a second strike capability (necessary for deterrence to work), McNamara said in effect "the sooner the better." See, Shapley, *Promise and Power*, p. 192.

attempted to achieve a strategic advantage by acquiring more offensive weapons or deploying any defensive measures, this balance was untenable.

This philosophy of stability over advantage put McNamara squarely in opposition to the Joint Chiefs. The relationship between the Secretary of Defense and the JCS was already strained by the management style of McNamara and other policy issues.¹⁶ Arms control was simply another issue to disagree on. Particularly in the realm of anti-ballistic missiles (ABM), McNamara and the Chiefs would be in complete opposition to one another. McNamara saw ABM systems as destabilizing to the U.S.-Soviet relationship, while the JCS saw them as a practical way to defend U.S. territory.

McNamara was not able to actively participate in the 1968 SALT formulations because he left the Pentagon in February 1968. However, his replacement, Clark Clifford, was also an advocate of arms control. While he differed with McNamara on specific issues, his overall policy goal was the same -- reducing global tensions. For instance, Clifford agreed with the JCS that an ABM system should be deployed, but he viewed it only as a bargaining chip for future negotiations.¹⁷ Clifford was not overly concerned with the details of the initial SALT proposal because he believed that the first meetings would primarily be a test of Soviet sincerity.¹⁸

Secretary of State Dean Rusk, like McNamara, was also a staunch advocate of arms control policies as a way to further stability in U.S.-Soviet relations. Formally in charge of the interagency process which would formulate the arms control proposals, he

¹⁶ Mark Perry, *Four Stars* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), p. 198.

¹⁷ Alton Frye, "U.S. Decision Making for SALT," in *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond*, Mason Willrich and John Rhineland, eds. (New York: Free Press, 1975), p. 75.

believed that the costs of the arms race were ruinous to both sides and that it was necessary to control this as quickly as possible.¹⁹ As a result, he believed arms control agreements to be a critical element of détente. And advancing détente was important to Rusk. As Warren Cohen notes, “Rusk unquestionably perceived and reciprocated the Soviet desire for détente.”²⁰

However, Rusk believed that the Chiefs were an obstacle to his policy goals. This was for two reasons. First, he realized that any arms control agreement that the JCS opposed was in danger of being defeated in the Senate. Rusk believed that the Chiefs had too much power in their relations with Congress. Indeed, he was sympathetic to the ideas of Eisenhower’s farewell address, where the departing president spoke of the unwarranted influence of the military-industrial complex.²¹ Second, he believed that the Joint Chiefs were not truly interested in arms control. He perceived the JCS as always taking positions that would delay or weaken arms control agreements. For instance, in the 1968 Seabed Arms Control discussions, Rusk was incensed at JCS insistence that it was not in the national interest to prohibit the deployment of nuclear weapons on the seabed, in spite of the fact that they had no future plans to do so.²² In the SALT process, Rusk admits that

¹⁸ Record of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Committee of Principals, 8 July 1968, *Foreign Relations of the United States* vol. XIV, pp. 633-637.

¹⁹ Rusk, *As I Saw It*, p.350.

²⁰ Warren I. Cohen, *Dean Rusk* (Totowa, New Jersey: Cooper Square Publishers, 1980), p. 301.

²¹ Glenn Seaborg and Benjamin Loeb, *Stemming the Tide: Arms Control in the Johnson Years* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1987), p. 410. See also, Rusk, p. 348.

²² Rusk, *As I Saw It*, pp. 346-348.

he was “increasingly impatient with the Joint Chiefs’ cautiousness and. . . instinctive resistance to arms control.”²³

The National Security Advisor, Walt Rostow, was also interested in achieving a reduction in U.S.-Soviet tensions via arms control. He recognized that arms control was more than seeking advantage over the other party. In his memoirs, he notes that arms control negotiations require the parties “to get under the other’s skin.” He believed that both sides needed to understand the security concerns of the other if bilateral tensions were to be reduced. In short, Rostow believed that before there was any chance for an agreement, an extraordinary degree of mutual understanding was required.²⁴

Unlike future National Security Advisors, Rostow did not exercise control over the interagency process on arms control issues. He made it a point to defer management of this process to the Secretary of State.²⁵ However, Rostow did support the administration’s efforts in other ways. For instance, Rostow conducted regular meetings with Soviet Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin and was able to supply the administration with valuable information on Soviet intentions. These meetings were exclusively for information, not negotiation.

II. Formal Structures

Earlier in 1967, the Johnson administration had created an ad-hoc body to study SALT issues. Due to the possibility that an administration proposal for an ABM

²³ Ibid. p. 350.

²⁴ W.W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1972), p. 383.

²⁵ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 186.

moratorium might lead to strategic arms talks, this body was chaired by Raymond Garthoff, a Soviet specialist from the State Department. The Joint Chiefs were initially excluded from these discussions, because Robert McNamara felt that their inclusion might create friction before it was clear that negotiations would actually be arranged.²⁶ This exclusion by McNamara is symptomatic of how poor relations between the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense can hurt military participation in the formulation process. However, when the prospect for arms control talks diminished in the wake of the Glassboro summit in June 1967, this group was disbanded.²⁷

By the time the Soviets consented to arms negotiations in 1968, the Johnson administration had an established interagency process to formulate an agreed-upon position. The basic structure of the process is detailed below in Chart 1. The Committee of Principals had been created in the Johnson administration to handle arms control matters, and it had previously supervised the work on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Chaired by Secretary of State Rusk, it also included ACDA Director William Foster, Defense Secretary McNamara (later replaced by Clark Clifford), and National Security Advisor Walt Rostow. The Joint Chiefs were represented by their Chairman, General Wheeler.

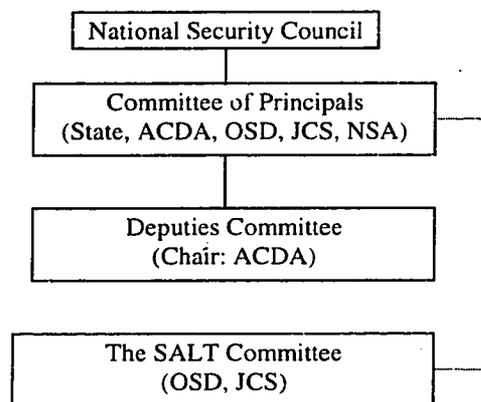
Below this group was the Committee of Deputies. However, concern over JCS objections to the committee's membership led to its insignificance in the process. In particular, the JCS was concerned by the extent of the involvement of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) in this body. Not only was a representative from

²⁶ Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, p. 87.

²⁷ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 24.

ACDA in charge of this committee (Deputy Director Adrian “Butch” Fisher), ACDA provided most of the staff support to this body, as well. And while this body was ostensibly the proponent body for SALT, President Johnson and Defense Secretary Clifford felt that too much ACDA involvement would almost guarantee JCS opposition. It was generally perceived that the JCS viewed ACDA as a group of “ritual disarmers.” Hence, it was believed that this forum would not make much progress. Newhouse emphasizes this point when he notes, “ACDA’s Butch Fisher, for all his skill and experience, could not have achieved much by using the Committee of Deputies as the ‘action’ group on SALT.”²⁸

Chart 1. US Interagency Process for SALT in the Johnson Administration



This left the administration with the problem of who would formulate proposals for the higher-level bureaucracy. The solution came from the civilians in the Defense Department. An ad hoc group in the Pentagon was set up in July 1968 under the OSD’s office of International Security Affairs, then headed by Paul Warnke. One of Warnke’s

²⁸ Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, p. 111.

deputies, Morton Halperin, chaired this group which became known as the SALT Committee. The SALT Committee did not formally replace the Deputies Committee, but formulated many positions which the Deputies Committee later adopted as its own. For instance, when the SALT Committee created a draft treaty outline for the negotiations, it was agreed that Adrian Fisher would circulate the proposal as his own work.²⁹ In the SALT Committee, the JCS Chairman was represented by his assistant, Royal Allison, an air force pilot newly promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General.³⁰ In the end, Allison successfully functioned as a broker between the interests of the JCS and the rest of government.³¹

III. Impact of the Joint Chiefs in the Formulation Process

The arms control proposal that the Johnson administration prepared for the first SALT negotiations was heavily influenced by the Chiefs. The JCS views were included because the administration feared that any proposal that did not meet their approval would not be acceptable to the Congress. As Wolfe notes, “the president had wanted not only a meaningful negotiating package, but one with which the Joint Chiefs would agree, for without their support congressional opposition was assured and lengthy delay likely in arriving at a U.S. SALT position.”³²

Despite a long-standing desire by the Johnson administration to start serious arms control negotiations with the Soviets, there was no prepared U.S. arms negotiating

²⁹ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 194.

³⁰ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 25.

³¹ Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, p. 114.

³² Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 24.

position in the summer of 1968.³³ The SALT Committee was tasked with creating a draft treaty outline as quickly as possible. This group sought to avoid bureaucratic conflict by avoiding any “agenda-based” proposal. In practice, what this meant was that the interagency process should accommodate the concerns of the Chiefs. Thomas Wolfe argues that the Chiefs were brought on board by the simple expedient of having the proposal sidestep the two toughest issues, MIRVs and ABMs. “What the SALT package came down to was basically a freeze on long range offensive missiles mixed with a little regulation of defensive ABMs.”³⁴

Anti-ballistic missiles were an emerging technology that the JCS felt very strongly about continuing research and initial deployments. The United States enjoyed a technological advantage over the Soviets in this area and the JCS did not want to lose that. For instance, in a January 1967 memo to Defense Secretary McNamara, JCS Chairman General Wheeler noted that the U.S. should maintain its ABM effort and institute early deployments in order to prevent an agreement from totally precluding the U.S. program.³⁵

This position was in stark contrast to the urgings of Defense Secretary McNamara, who believed that an ABM system would destabilize the strategic balance between the superpowers. What is more, McNamara and a number of civilians in OSD believed that the current ABM technology would not provide an effective defense against a Soviet attack. Still, JCS Chairman Wheeler indicated to McNamara and President Johnson

³³ Frye in Willrich and Rhinelander, “U.S. Decision Making,” p. 74.

³⁴ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, pp. 147-148.

several times during 1967 that he was prepared to make his case directly to Congress for a “light” ABM system that would protect 25 cities at a cost of \$10 billion. In the end, the administration eventually backed the JCS proposal, but publicly labeled it as an “anti-Chinese” defense or to negate an accidental launch.³⁶

In the SALT proposal, the Chiefs were adamant that ABM technology not be inhibited in the U.S. negotiating position. The Chiefs were interested in preserving the U.S. technological advantage relative to the Soviets. As a result, the draft treaty outline gave no mention of restraining ABM research and development, only that ABMs should be limited to “set and equivalent” numbers for both sides. And the exact number of “set and equivalent” ABMs was not stipulated because the JCS insisted on it.³⁷

Multiple Independently-targeted Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs) was another area that the JCS felt should not be constrained. Missiles, while expensive, do not destroy targets – they are only the delivery vehicle. MIRV technology allows a single missile to carry multiple warheads and, as a result, destroy multiple targets. It is cost efficient to place multiple warheads on a single missile, rather than building additional delivery systems for each weapon. What is more, by 1968, the Soviets did not yet have this technology. So U.S. strategic superiority could be maintained by not constraining this development. The Chiefs insisted that there be no numerical restrictions on MIRVs; they saw MIRVs as providing greater security for the United States.³⁸

³⁵ Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara (JCSM-30-67), 19 January 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States* vol. XIV, pp. 426-428.

³⁶ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 191.

³⁷ Seaborg and Loeb, *Stemming the Tide*, p. 437.

³⁸ *Ibid.* See also, Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 562.

While the JCS position on MIRVs prevailed, there is evidence that other elements of the National Security bureaucracy were waiting for the negotiations before challenging this position. Many felt that MIRV technology would dangerously destabilize the strategic balance if it was allowed to grow unchecked. Certainly, the Soviets would want to constrain MIRV technology, and this could be used against the JCS. As Frye notes, "The issue was considered too contentious to resolve in advance. . . . Once the U.S. was directly engaged in negotiations with the Soviet Union, some officials hoped that Moscow's own concern about MIRV development would justify the bureaucratic friction of thrashing out an agreed American position on the matter."³⁹ Clark Clifford notes that he believed a ban on MIRVs was "a major objective from the beginning."⁴⁰ Dean Rusk also stated that he had hoped to limit MIRVs in the 1968 talks⁴¹ and there is evidence that Lyndon Johnson shared this view. Prados indicates that Johnson felt an urgency to conduct the talks due to his concern over the destabilizing impact of MIRV technology if it was deployed. He notes, "if there was going to be a MIRV ban, something had to happen quickly."⁴² But for now, MIRVs were not limited in the U.S. proposal.

The JCS had a great deal of success in shaping the initial Johnson proposal. Many JCS proposals were reflected in the final government proposal. However, this initial draft was not entirely dictated by the interests of the Joint Chiefs. In particular, the final proposal reflected a JCS concession on the issue of verification. The Chiefs had long held to the view that any arms control agreement would necessarily include a

³⁹ Frye in Willrich and Rhinelander, "U.S. Decision Making," p. 76.

⁴⁰ Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 562.

⁴¹ Rusk, *As I Saw It*, p. 351.

⁴² Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 195.

provision for on-site verification to protect against Soviet cheating. However, it was well known that the Soviets rejected any on-site verification provisions, preferring instead to rely only on "National Technical Means" (satellites). Realizing that on-site verification would be an impediment to any agreement, the JCS was convinced to accept a SALT proposal with no on-site verification. This was largely due to the fact that the Soviets had not yet tested, let alone deployed, a MIRV capability.⁴³ Hence, they could be relatively certain that each Soviet missile contained only one warhead. When the Soviets achieved a MIRV capability, the installation would be evident to U.S. satellites.

JCS acceptance on this matter was an important point. As John Newhouse notes, "Had they clung to (the on-site verification) position in 1968, Johnson would have had little to negotiate about."⁴⁴ But the lack of a Soviet MIRV capability was the selling point for the JCS. Until the Soviets possessed a MIRV capability, the lack of on-site verification preserved a U.S. strategic advantage because the Soviets could not verify the number of U.S. warheads in any given missile. Once the Soviets began to acquire a MIRV capability, the JCS would have to rethink the issue of on-site verification, as well as what type of agreements were verifiable.

By mid-August, the SALT Committee had worked out the consensus proposal. This proposal was similar to LBJ's 1964 verified freeze: a cap on ICBMs (with no MIRV constraints) at twelve hundred, actually permitting small increases in United States force levels, plus equivalent but unspecified ABM limits. Now, officially authored by the Committee of Deputies, the draft treaty outline went before the Committee of Principals

⁴³ Frye in Willrich and Rhinelanders, "U.S. Decision Making," p. 77.

⁴⁴ Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, p. 124.

on 31 July. A freeze on intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) and lesser missiles, and a ban on mobile missiles were included to further assuage the Chiefs' sensibilities. The deficiencies of the United States military in these areas made these restrictions a method of limiting U.S. disadvantages relative to the Soviets.⁴⁵

Of course, this process was all for naught. Before these talks could progress further, they were suspended. Soviet tanks rolling into Czechoslovakia to crush the "Prague Spring" on 20 August 1968 prompted the United States to cancel the negotiations. When new talks began in 1969, the Johnson administration had left office and the incoming Nixon administration had completed a comprehensive reevaluation of the U.S. position. The new Nixon administration saw no need to continue along the same lines in SALT as the Johnson administration. In particular, the Nixon administration did not want to tailor a SALT proposal exclusively to suit the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁴⁶

Nixon Administration:

The Nixon administration was actually able to negotiate and conclude the SALT I accords. The formal structure the Nixon interagency process was quite typical, and the Chiefs were fully involved there. However, an ad hoc group of high-level administration officials short-circuited the formal process and reduced their influence accordingly. The support of the JCS was still sought by the President since their support was needed in the ratification phase, but they were not critical players in the formulation process. During

⁴⁵ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 194.

⁴⁶ Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, p. 162.

the tenure of Admiral Moorer, the JCS often accepted administration policies with which they did not agree for assurances of future funding for military programs.

I. The Actors

Relations between the key advisors in the Nixon administration is best understood in the context of their relations with Nixon's principal foreign policy advisor, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. He and Nixon shared a similar common view of international relations, believing the global stage was governed by *realpolitik*. They also shared a mistrust of the bureaucracy. Both seemed convinced that the bureaucracy was hostile to White House interests.⁴⁷ Due to this affinity, foreign policy decision making came to be centralized in the White House with Kissinger playing a central role. He controlled the access of other foreign policy advisors to the president, as well as the information that reached the oval office.

While General Wheeler served through the first year of the Nixon administration (until July 1970), Admiral Thomas Moorer was the JCS Chairman who considered the bulk of the Nixon administration's SALT positions. He was stylistically less polished than his predecessor. As one observer noted, "What his views lacked in elegance they made up in explicitness."⁴⁸ Moorer tended to advocate a traditional military philosophy that most world problems could be solved with the application of overwhelming military force.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 39-44.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁹ Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 208.

By background Moorer, as contrasted to Wheeler, was not trained for the world of Washington politics. In a forty-one year career, Admiral Moorer had only a few staff assignments totaling less than five years. Having spent the preponderance of his career in operational and command assignments, he was less suited to the bargaining process. As Kissinger notes, "(Moorer) spent the 1960s in command positions which, while not without their frustrations, did not produce the physical and psychological exhaustion of high-level Washington."⁵⁰ What is more, his lack of joint service experience predisposed him to be clearly parochial towards interservice cooperation. As one former military official noted, "He was so partisan that he invariably portrayed the Navy's needs as America's needs, while arguing that the most fundamental programs of other services detracted from national security."⁵¹

Moorer's relationship with the President and Kissinger was also marred by an internal scandal in 1971. Given the secretive nature of the Nixon NSC, the Joint Chiefs were largely out of the loop on U.S. foreign policy. As a result, Moorer convinced navy yeoman Charles Radford, who was assigned to Kissinger's staff, to begin secretly forwarding NSC memos to the JCS. The "spy ring" was uncovered in December 1971 when an internal NSC memo was leaked to the press. When Nixon became aware of the scandal, he ordered John Ehrlichman to "sweep it under the rug."⁵² It has been argued that Nixon's refusal to publicize the scandal was because he hoped to use it to ensure that the JCS supported his policies. As Ambrose noted:

⁵⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 36.

⁵¹ Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 208.

⁵² John Ehrlichman, *Witness to Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), p. 305.

The point being that with the SALT agreements coming up in five months at the Moscow summit, Nixon could not afford to have the JCS criticizing his arms control deal. . . Yeoman Radford had rendered his President a great service by making it possible for the commander in chief to blackmail his military high command into supporting his policies.⁵³

Whether Moorer and the Chiefs were truly “blackmailed” to back positions they did not support, particularly arms control positions, may never be known. But, while they fought the final agreement reached at the Moscow summit in 1972, they did eventually endorse and advocate its passage before Congress.

Philosophically, Moorer clearly saw the arms race and controlling strategic arms as a zero-sum game. He worked to preserve military interests in the negotiations, but did not see the political tradeoffs of arms control that were foremost in the minds of the civilian advisors. In his public statements promoting the SALT agreement, he continually stressed the advantages that the agreement held for U.S. security. For instance, in two public speeches in the Summer of 1972, Moorer's dominant theme was constraining the growing Soviet strategic advantage. He noted:

Granted, we have a freeze in favor of the Soviet Union. But considering what they were capable of with the momentum of their programs, we have forestalled a 1977 ratio of about three to two in their favor. This factor, more than any other, points out the significance of the Interim Offensive Agreement.⁵⁴

For the President and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, détente could only occur from a position of strength. This perception of international relations had pervaded Kissinger's strategic philosophy since he had written his dissertation on the

⁵³ Stephen Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician, 1962-1972* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 488.

international dynamic of 19th century Europe. Kissinger's conservative *realpolitik*, as reflected in his dissertation, was based on the principle, taught by realists from Karl von Clausewitz to Hans Morgenthau, that diplomacy cannot be divorced from the realities of force and power.⁵⁵ As a result, Kissinger was willing to invest in new weapons programs in order to use them as bargaining chips in negotiations.

Philosophically, the National Security Advisor viewed arms control as more than just a worthy objective in superpower relations. It was also a means to further progress in other areas of U.S.-Soviet relations. Negotiations were acceptable if very specific goals were sought and if they could be linked to other Soviet behavior. Given the United States advantage in nuclear weapons, Kissinger believed that the USSR would be more eager than the United States to negotiate an arms agreement.⁵⁶ And this desire could be used to achieve progress in other areas of superpower relations, such as the conflict in Vietnam. Kissinger believed that the Soviet Union would be prepared to sacrifice her interests in Asia and the Middle East for improved relations with the United States.⁵⁷

Kissinger's relations with other presidential advisors were governed by his ability to manipulate and outmaneuver what he perceived as impediments to his dominance of the foreign policy process. Employing a variety of tactics, such as parallel covert negotiations with other countries, controlling the policy agenda and limiting access to the

⁵⁴ Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, *Speeches and Statements as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington: Department of Defense, 1974), pp. 146-155

⁵⁵ Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 75.

⁵⁶ Tad Szulc, *The Illusion of Peace: Foreign Policy in the Nixon Years* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), pp. 68-69.

⁵⁷ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, p. 166-167.

president,⁵⁸ he won a prominent position on a whole array of foreign policy issues including Middle East policy, the mining of North Vietnamese harbors, and the military incursion into Cambodia.⁵⁹

This manipulation of other advisors can be seen in one example noted by Kissinger's congressional liaison, John Lehman. He tells of listening as the NSA ordered arms negotiator Gerard Smith to proceed with an antiballistic missile proposal for two American sites rather than four. Hanging up the phone, he then took Defense Secretary Laird's call on another line, saying, "I agree with you on the need for four sites, but that goddamn Gerry is constantly making concessions."⁶⁰ While Kissinger's attempts at manipulation were not always this blatant, this instance is symptomatic of his operating style with other advisors.

Melvin Laird was well-suited to the position of Secretary of Defense. He viewed arms control as a way to preserve U.S. strategic advantages. The Secretary of Defense firmly believed that the Soviets were going for a "first strike" capability.⁶¹ As a result, he viewed arms limitation agreements as a way of constraining a growing Soviet strategic advantage. As he noted in a roundtable discussion:

Time is on the side of the Soviet Union. It can devote a great proportion of its resources, twice as much as we can in relation to gross domestic

⁵⁸ Jean Garrison, *The Games Advisors Play* (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of South Carolina, 1996), pp. 60-75.

⁵⁹ Betty Glad and Michael Link, "President Nixon's Inner Circle of Advisors," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. XXVI, no. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 23-25.

⁶⁰ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, p. 191.

⁶¹ Smith, *Doubletalk*, p. 30.

product. *SALT talks and arms limitations are of much greater advantage to the United States than the Soviet Union.* (emphasis mine)⁶²

Laird was also aware of the financial benefit of arms control. He believed that SALT would codify an inevitable reduction of U.S. strategic forces due to congressional budget cuts. As Gerard Smith noted:

The changing popular and congressional mood about strategic arms was not lost on such an astute politician as Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. His interest in SALT was, I thought, in good measure based on a concern that in the absence of agreed limitations the Congress would go for some unilateral limitation.

As an eight-term member of Congress, Laird was most noted for his political savvy and congressional connections which gave him a power base independent of the administration. He also was adept at media "leaks." As Kissinger notes, "I learned that when Laird called early in the morning to complain about a newspaper story, he was its probable source."⁶³

While Laird enjoyed good relations with the JCS, Kissinger was wary of the Secretary of Defense. Despite Laird's disagreement with the JCS over an early withdrawal from Vietnam, his relations with the Chiefs were very amicable. Laird went to great lengths to repair the damage done to OSD-JCS relations during the McNamara era.⁶⁴ Relations between Laird and National Security Advisor Kissinger were governed by Kissinger's concern over Laird's congressional connections. As one official described it, Kissinger viewed Laird "as a shrewd and difficult competitor with political

⁶² John Daly, Melvin Laird, Thomas McIntyre, Charles Mathias, and Paul Nitze, *Who's First in Defense – The U.S. or U.S.S.R.?* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1976), p. 6.

⁶³ Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 32.

instincts who had too much political clout to be ignored.”⁶⁵ Indeed, Kissinger often remarked that Laird was “out to get him.”⁶⁶

Secretary of State William Rogers was in favor of arms control as a way of reducing tensions between the superpowers, but was hampered by his limited knowledge of foreign affairs and his political position within the administration. Nixon had selected Rogers for the State Department in order to control the bureaucracy. As he put it, Rogers would make “the little boys in the State Department” behave. His lack of knowledge in foreign affairs was actually viewed as an asset by Nixon, because it guaranteed that policy direction would be set by the White House.⁶⁷ However, Rogers' lack of knowledge on foreign affairs, and the resulting need to rely on his subordinates in a bureaucracy that Nixon did not trust, further damaged his credentials as a principal foreign policy advisor.⁶⁸

Rogers, moreover, did not share the same grand foreign policy vision as the president. He did not share his desire to spend a lot of time theorizing about international relations. As he once noted, “I don't accept the chessboard theory that we gain countries and lose them.”⁶⁹ As a result, Kissinger rose to prominence not only because his views were similar to the president but also because Rogers' views were not. As Undersecretary of State Elliot Richardson noted, “there was something in Bill Rogers

⁶⁴ Perry, *Four Stars*, pp. 216-219.

⁶⁵ Garrison, *Games Advisors Play*, p. 50.

⁶⁶ Szulc, *Illusion of Peace*, p. 18.

⁶⁷ Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician*, p.234.

⁶⁸ Garrison, *Games Advisors Play*, p. 50.

⁶⁹ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, p. 197.

which caused him to look down on Nixon and his musings on geopolitics. . . The truth was that Kissinger owed his rise to a default on the part of Rogers.”⁷⁰

ACDA Director Gerard Smith was by far the greatest advocate of arms control in the Nixon administration. Smith viewed arms control as a worthy goal in itself, as opposed to other administration officials who saw arms control as a mechanism to achieve other foreign policy objectives. Smith did not believe that either side should attempt to achieve strategic advantage. As he noted in a May 1969 letter to the Secretary of State, “if either side is striving for or appears to be striving for an effective counterforce first strike capability, then there is no hope for strategic arms control.”⁷¹ He was particularly concerned about the proliferation of MIRVs, which he viewed as “the most significant (and destabilizing) weapons development since the ballistic missile.”⁷²

II. Structure

Kissinger did not control the SALT process from the very beginning. Given the prominence of the Vietnam conflict in the election of 1968, arms control was not the top issue on the initial foreign policy agenda. As a result, ACDA initially took the lead on SALT. ACDA Director Gerard Smith set up the first interagency working group to proceed with the preparations for SALT. This arrangement was formalized in March 1969 by NSSM 28, calling for ACDA to supervise a major study of various SALT options. This group was referred to as the SALT Steering Group, and was composed of

⁷⁰ Jonathan Aitken, *Nixon: A Life* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1993), p. 382.

⁷¹ Smith, *Doubletalk*, p. 24.

⁷² Isaacson, *Kissinger*, p. 317.

representatives from ACDA, State, OSD, JCS, CIA, National Security Council, Atomic Energy Agency, and the President's Science Advisor.⁷³

During the next two months, however, there was great dissatisfaction both in the White House and the Pentagon with the quality and reliability of the group's work. For instance, General Wheeler objected that the United States lacked the capability to verify many potential arms control agreements solely by national technical means. In particular, the JCS chairman believed that satellites could not verify a MIRV ban because even overhead imagery could not see how many warheads were under a missile shroud.⁷⁴ The main product of this dissatisfaction was the creation of the Verification Panel, a body created to be a senior-level policy body just below the central decision makers.

The creation of this body was the key organizational maneuver that allowed the White House and Henry Kissinger to control the SALT formulation process. Despite its initial mission to consider the verifiability of possible arms control positions, it soon became the key policy formulation body for SALT positions. Its deliberations furnished the final input to each decision formally taken in the NSC and usually issued as an National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) or a National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM). And because Kissinger chaired this panel, he now dominated U.S. policy discussions on SALT.

Below the Verification Panel was the Verification Panel Working Group (VPWG) – a group created at the same time and primarily designed to provide staff support to the Kissinger group. Composed of the same agencies as its superior, this group conducted or

⁷³ National Security Council, National Security Decision Memorandum 28, 6 March 1969, National Security Archives [SALT I], Washington, D.C.

directed the appropriate research and studies related to SALT. During active negotiations, work referred to the VPWG often tended to be linked to current negotiating problems.

There were also general foreign policy forums involved in the SALT formulation process. The Undersecretaries Committee for SALT (USC), chaired by the deputy secretary of state, was originally a non-SALT senior body set up under the Nixon national security system to ensure uniform implementation of foreign policy decisions throughout the government. It was designed to have an advisory role in assuring that the SALT positions did not contradict other areas of U.S. foreign policy. However, some analysts contend that this committee never became very active in discharging this function.⁷⁵

Subordinate to the Undersecretaries Committee was the SALT Backstopping Committee. This group was the focal point for SALT support activities in Washington during the actual negotiations. In effect, this committee directed the traffic to and from the SALT delegation and initiated staffing actions responsive to the proceedings in Geneva. It also provided staff support to the Verification Panel and its working group.

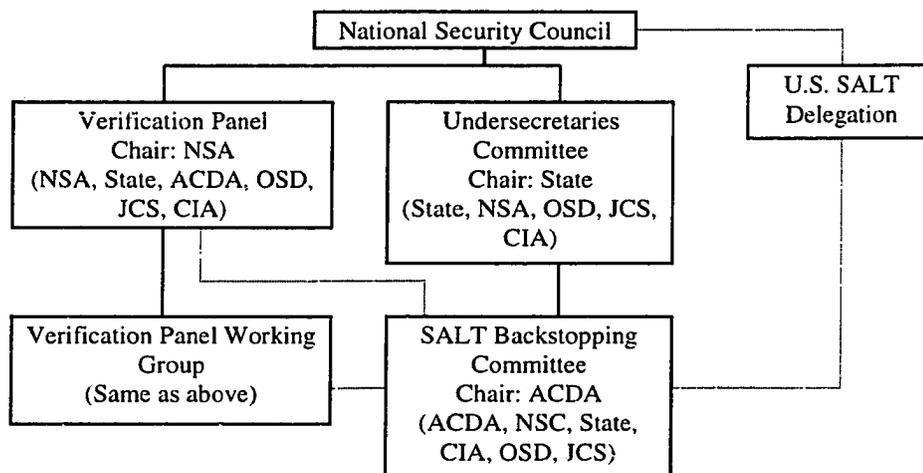
The final element of the formal arms control process was the negotiating delegation. When counter-proposals were offered by the Soviets, it was important to have representatives from the interagency actors who could speak for their organizations, as well as to provide their unique expertise. Here the JCS was represented well. Lieutenant General Royal Allison, the Chairman's personal representative on arms

⁷⁴ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 285. See also, Smith, *Doubletalk*, p. 99.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

control issues, served as the JCS representative to the delegation and was widely respected by his peers on the delegation.⁷⁶

Chart 2. US Interagency Process for SALT in the Nixon Administration⁷⁷



The formal policy structure for SALT under the Nixon administration was not the complete story on arms control formulation. As the negotiations progressed, the Chiefs, along with other government agencies, were excluded from several important deliberations. This was a practice that was consistent with Nixon's and Kissinger's philosophical aversion to bureaucratic involvement.⁷⁸ Verification Panel meetings were increasingly devoid of real discussion, being utilized by Kissinger primarily as a forum for floating proposals that had already been discussed with the Soviets. Further, Nixon's reliance on Kissinger as both the sole conduit of information about SALT and as a source

⁷⁶ Telephone interview with former ACDA Deputy Director Spurgeon Keeney, 17 December 1997.

⁷⁷ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 30.

⁷⁸ Stanley Hoffman, "Détente" in *The Making of America's Soviet Policy*, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., ed. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 248.

of advice himself led to disenchantment among the excluded actors. This in turn reinforced White House wariness of the bureaucracy.⁷⁹

Kissinger was also one of the primary avenues of negotiations with the Soviets. Both Nixon and Kissinger desired a foreign policy process that excluded the State Department and gave the White House all of the credit.⁸⁰ In short, they envisaged a process of private negotiations separate and apart from any formal negotiations. As a result, on February 14, 1969, Kissinger visited Soviet Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin at his apartment in Washington. Several days later, Kissinger introduced the Soviet ambassador to President Nixon, who emphasized that a private communications channel between Washington and Moscow was desirable. Hence, the "Backchannel" was born. This private line of negotiation was controlled by Kissinger and included many areas of U.S.-Soviet interests including arms control. This forum yielded tangible results ahead of the formal negotiating process. For instance, the first word that the Soviets would agree to attend a SALT negotiation in 1969 came through the backchannel.⁸¹

This "Backchannel" angered many who were involved in the formal formulation and negotiation of the SALT agreement. Admiral Elmo Zumwalt notes, "Doubtless that prolonged contemplation of the complicated subject of arms limitations stretched [the Chiefs'] intellects, but it accomplished little else. Indeed we were purposely kept performing essentially irrelevant tasks, although we did not know it at that time."⁸²

⁷⁹ Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, p. 42. See also, Barry Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control* (Washington: Institute for Defense Analyses, 1988), p. 10.

⁸⁰ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, p. 206.

⁸¹ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, pp. 286-287.

⁸² Elmo R. Zumwalt, *On Watch: A Memoir* (New York: The New York Times Book Company, 1976), p. 348.

Gerard Smith, the director of ACDA and head of the U.S. negotiating delegation, was even more critical of this practice:

For months, the White House had carried out one line of SALT policy while directing the delegation to take another. Was it necessary to pursue such a duplicitous diplomacy? It was known as early as December 1970 that the Soviets would agree to an ABM treaty and probably agree to certain parallel measures constraining offensive arms deployments, presumably in a less formal agreement. Why was it that the rather simple task of spelling out this general understanding was handled in this unusual fashion? President Nixon later said that secret personal diplomacy had to be resorted to because of the way the Soviet leadership works. An equally persuasive case can be made that it resulted from his distrust of officials responsible for SALT – the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the director of the Arms Control Agency, and our associates. I thought the whole episode a sad reflection on the state of affairs in the administration. Kissinger and the President went the Soviets one better. At least in the Soviet Union, the whole Politburo was consulted, on several occasions. The bulk of the American national security leadership was never consulted. It was informed after the fact.⁸³

III. Impact of the Joint Chiefs in the Formulation Process

A. 1969-1970, Formulation During General Wheeler's Tenure

The first SALT proposal forwarded by the Nixon administration came in April 1970 while General Earl Wheeler was still JCS Chairman. However, Wheeler and the Chiefs had much less impact on the initial proposal than they had on the Johnson proposal. The JCS favored "option A," a position much like the Johnson proposal -- a limit of 12 ABM sites for both sides, no ban on MIRVs, and a high ceiling on launchers so that the United States would not have to cut existing forces. Kissinger favored "Option B," which was similar but advocated only one ABM site for each side which

must be deployed near the capital. However, the rest of the bureaucracy advocated a position which also included some restrictions on MIRVs.

Kissinger advised the President to authorize the majority position, but keep his proposal as a fall back position for later negotiations. As he noted, "If the Soviets rejected (the U.S. position), as I firmly expected, we could then put forward option B from a much stronger domestic and bureaucratic position."⁸⁴ However, an additional provision was included by Kissinger that called for on-site verification to ensure the MIRV limitations. This was not a part of the agreed upon position. The JCS had advocated on-site verification but had been out-voted in the NSC and registered their objection in a dissenting note. One analyst contends that Kissinger included the provision to ensure the failure of the U.S. proposal.⁸⁵ The Soviets rejected this first proposal largely because of this provision. As Gerard Smith recalled, the Soviets were deeply interested in the U.S. position until he read the provision for on-site verification. At that point, they stopped taking notes and one Soviet remarked, "We had been hoping that you would make a serious MIRV proposal."⁸⁶

B. 1970-1972, Formulation During Admiral Moorer's Tenure

When Admiral Thomas Moorer became the JCS Chairman in 1970, he developed and obtained the concurrence of the other Chiefs on a series of guidelines concerning

⁸³ Smith, *Doubletalk*, p. 234.

⁸⁴ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, p. 319.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 320. See also Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* (Washington: Brookings, 1985), p. 251.

⁸⁶ Smith, *Doubletalk*, pp. 171-172. Also, Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, pp. 138-139.

strategic arms control. First, Moorer signaled a willingness to proceed with arms limitation, subject to a few conditions. He did not want to attempt to achieve identical force compositions on both sides, instead allowing for asymmetries. In this approach, he recognized the different emphasis that the U.S. and Soviets placed on their strategic force structures and concluded that any attempt to reconcile the two structures into one was unworkable. However, while asymmetries in force structure might exist, Admiral Moorer was firmly against asymmetries in the final numbers for both sides.

Moorer also wanted the U.S. to focus on the number of launchers, as opposed to the number of warheads. This was for several reasons. First, it was his contention that this simplified the military task which was to focus on disabling Soviet systems capable of striking the United States. It also made the task of verification easier. But most importantly, the Soviet MIRV capability was not nearly as advanced as the U.S. strategic force. By the time of the negotiations, the United States was actually deploying MIRV technology while the Soviets had not even begun testing it.⁸⁷ This meant that by focusing exclusively on launchers, the United States could field more warheads than the Soviets, even if the two sides agreed to equal levels of delivery vehicles. The focus on launchers, in short, was intended to further U.S. strategic advantages, as opposed to the theoretical goal of arms control, international stability.

Nor did Admiral Moorer want any future arms control agreement to constrain the U.S. advantage in technological innovation. To this end, his guidelines stipulated that any agreement should try to avoid any limit on technical improvements. Attempts to do this were practically unverifiable, he argued. Moorer also did not want any agreement to

prevent the U.S. from obtaining a capability that the Soviets already possessed.⁸⁸ With these provisions in mind, the JCS attempted to influence the U.S. negotiating position in SALT accordingly.

One of the most prominent issues in the SALT negotiations was the ABM issue. The JCS remained steadfast in their support for maintaining an anti-ballistic missile capability, despite the fact that they recognized that the system was not completely effective. In a February 1969 memo, they noted “The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that while the revised ballistic missile defense deployment . . . does not provide the necessary capabilities against the [Soviet] threat, it will add to the overall defensive capability and strategic posture of the United States against that threat, and will be compatible with future improvement.”⁸⁹ On this issue, the JCS seemed to have found a friend in the new administration with Henry Kissinger. He agreed with the JCS and the Defense Department on the ABM issue. However, Kissinger saw deploying a credible ABM capability as a necessary strategic component to beginning negotiations with the Soviets on limiting arms. The Soviets would agree to limitations on strategic arms if the United States agreed to limitations on defensive systems. To Kissinger, ABM was meant to be a strategic compromise with the Soviets -- a bargaining chip.

President Nixon agreed with Kissinger, and in March 1971, he approved a four-site ABM program for the U.S. military. In the negotiating instructions that were initially

⁸⁷ Smith, *Doubletalk*, pp. 154-155.

⁸⁸ Jeffrey McKittrick, “Arms Control and the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” *Parameters: The Journal of the U.S. Army War College*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1984), p. 67.

⁸⁹ Memorandum, Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, 26 February 1969, National Security Archive [SALT I], Washington, D.C.

formulated, Nixon committed himself to the then current ABM program, "Safeguard."⁹⁰ However, by 1972, the U.S. position was negotiable. The primary concern of the Nixon administration was to constrain the Soviet's numerically superior offensive ballistic missile capability. This force was nearly fifty percent larger than its American counterpart by 1972. The Soviets, for their part, were eager to constrain the American ABM program due to its technological superiority over its Soviet counterpart. As a result, a decision was made to accept an ABM treaty with the Soviets in exchange for getting an "equitable" agreement on offensive arms. To this end, the instructions to the U.S. delegation were modified in November 1970 and consistently reflected an openness to considering ABM limitations.⁹¹

Given their stance on the ABM issue, it is understandable that the JCS had serious reservations about the ABM treaty. They agreed to support the treaty only after they were given assurances by their civilian superiors that numerous defense programs would be supported, including the B-1 bomber, the Trident class submarine, and ABM defenses around capital and selected ICBM sites which the treaty allowed.⁹²

These new assurances also pulled the JCS off of their position that they would not support any agreement that provided for an unequal number of launchers in offensive weapons. By December 1971, with the administration actively pursuing an ABM

⁹⁰ National Security Council, National Security Decision Memorandum 33, 12 November 1969, National Security Archives [SALT I], Washington, D.C.

⁹¹ See, National Security Council, National Security Decision Memorandum 90, 2 November 1970, National Security Archives [SALT I], Washington, D.C. Further iterations of this policy change are also seen in NSDMs 102 (March 1971), 117 (July 1971), 120 (July 1971), and 127 (August 1971).

⁹² McKittrick, "Arms Control and the JCS," p. 67. CJCS Moorer later made statements to this effect. See, Moorer, *Speeches and Statements*, p. 250.

agreement, the Chiefs were even more inclined to oppose any agreement which froze the current level of offensive arms. They believed that the resulting codification of U.S. inferiority in this area would set a dangerous precedent.⁹³ But by 1972, the JCS agreed to a U.S. position which accepted the disparity in launchers.

But despite the willingness of the Chiefs to accept a disparity in launchers, limiting MIRV technology was not acceptable. The Joint Chiefs of Staff under Nixon were as adamantly opposed to a MIRV ban as they were under Johnson. Their representative, General Allison, argued that the United States should not and in fact could not stop the march of technology.⁹⁴ And while they were not the only proponents of this position, the lack of a MIRV ban in the final agreement can be seen as a victory for the Chiefs.

The Chiefs were also wary of any agreement which froze the current disparity in Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). However, some in government, including Henry Kissinger, were interested in a SLBM deal even at the current levels. He noted in NSDM 140, “as for submarine-launched ballistic missiles, the Delegation should make a strong effort to negotiate their inclusion in any interim offensive agreement.”⁹⁵ However, this would contradict Moorer’s guidelines – as well as reduce funding for this naval mission. However, promises to speed up the production of the new Trident submarines enticed Moorer to accept the unequal ceilings. The Trident was due to be in active service by 1981 at the earliest, but the White House offered to speed the process

⁹³ Smith, *Doubletalk*, p. 346.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

such that the first boats would reach the fleet by 1978. In a May 1972 meeting, an agreement was reached between Moorer and Kissinger. As Newhouse notes, "The exchange between Moorer and Kissinger was clear. . . The Navy would have Trident, assuming congressional approval, and the President would have the support of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for an SLBM deal that gave the Soviets nearly half again as many missile-carrying submarines as the United States."⁹⁶

The U.S. negotiating position maintained a firm linkage between the ABM and any interim agreement limiting offensive arms. The Nixon administration intended to use an agreement for limiting ABMs to obtain an agreement limiting offensive weapons. Indeed, James Dalton, a military staff member of the on-site delegation, noted that the tradeoff between ABM and limiting offensive arms was critical. Without ABM, the Soviets were not interested in limiting offensive arms. In his words, "The day that the Soviets got the ABM treaty, they were ready to go home."⁹⁷

As a result, U.S. negotiating instructions consistently recognized this linkage. For instance in NSDM 102, it stated that "the Chief of the U.S. Delegation should convey to the Chief of the Soviet Delegation that the United States is prepared to discuss the details of the ABM part of any agreement as a matter of priority *to facilitate continuing negotiations on offensive arms*"⁹⁸ (emphasis mine). The Nixon administration made it plain that agreements on offensive and defensive systems must be concluded

⁹⁵ National Security Council, National Security Decision Memorandum 140, 15 November 1971, National Security Archives [SALT I], Washington, D.C. This position was reiterated in NSDM 158 (23 March 1972).

⁹⁶ Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, p. 246.

⁹⁷ Telephone interview with General James Dalton, 19 February 1998.

simultaneously.⁹⁹ However, there is no evidence that the Chiefs were significantly involved in formulating this tradeoff.

Another area that the Joint Chiefs were interested in excluding from any agreement was limitations on Forward Based Systems (FBS). The Soviets wanted to include the U.S. European-based, nuclear capable systems in any agreement limiting strategic nuclear arms. They also wanted to include the nuclear arsenals of NATO allies in the U.S. totals. The Joint Chiefs of Staff adamantly opposed either of these inclusions. In particular, they were concerned that agreeing to Soviet demands on FBS would degrade U.S. conventional capabilities in Europe. After all, many of the U.S. conventional aircraft and artillery units were dual capable – that is, capable of carrying either nuclear or conventional weapons, depending on the circumstances. ACDA and the State Department appeared willing to make concessions on FBS. However, the President and Kissinger, citing the problems that FBS limitations would create with the NATO allies, supported the JCS position that FBS not be included in SALT.¹⁰⁰ To this end, negotiating instructions for the U.S. SALT delegation consistently gave no latitude on negotiating the FBS issue. For instance, on NSDM 33, Nixon stated clearly that “the Delegation should take the position that tactical nuclear forces and strategic forces of other nations are not to be included in these talks.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ National Security Council, National Security Decision Memorandum 102, 11 March 1971, National Security Archives [SALT I], Washington, D.C.

⁹⁹ National Security Council, National Security Decision Memorandum 117, 2 July 1971, National Security Archives [SALT I], Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁰¹ NSMM 33, 12 November 1969.

The final negotiations took place with little support from the formal negotiating delegation or the Joint Chiefs. At the May 1972 Moscow Summit, the final negotiations took place under the direction of only Nixon, Kissinger, and three key NSC aides, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, William Hyland and Winston Lord. Cables were wired frequently to Alexander Haig in Washington seeking the support of Admiral Moorer and the JCS on various proposals. But the Chiefs, as well as the entire SALT delegation, were left out of the formulation of several important U.S. positions.

For instance, President Nixon pressured the JCS to support the final position despite their lack of input in the final negotiations. On May 25th, President Nixon and Admiral Moorer had a tense exchange over JCS acceptance of the final negotiating terms in Moscow. In particular, Moorer and the Chiefs were concerned over the treaty provision which locked-in Soviet superiority in launchers over the life of the agreement. Moorer recommended rejecting the final proposal to make the Soviets give more ground. But Nixon pressed strongly for JCS concurrence¹⁰² and indicated that he was willing to proceed without JCS support, regardless of the consequences.¹⁰³ The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, stated that the U.S. positions were presented to the Chiefs, "in a manner that made it clear that objections would be unwelcome and useless." Indeed, Zumwalt later contended that the Chiefs' eventual endorsement probably made them derelict in their responsibility as the President's military advisors.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Webb and Cole, *Chairmen of the JCS*, p. 85.

¹⁰³ Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), p. 615.

¹⁰⁴ Zumwalt, *On Watch*, pp. 403-404.

Overall, the negotiations lacked the necessary technical expertise and advice across the board. There were many instances during this summit in which it was apparent that the U.S. team in Moscow was out of its depth in discussing technical issues.¹⁰⁵ For instance, Kissinger was prepared to accept a Soviet proposal to verify that silo sizes remained fixed by satellite verification only. However, he backed away when informed that this would only verify the width, and not the depth, of the silo (it also said nothing about the size of the missile within the silo).¹⁰⁶ Helmut Sonnefeldt, an NSC official who took notes for the president during the summit, noted that both Nixon and Brezhnev became extremely confused in attempting to resolve technical issues themselves.¹⁰⁷

Of course, these proposals had to rely on some outside support. At one point, Kissinger wired the results of one day's negotiations to Ambassador Gerard Smith, the head of the SALT negotiating team, telling him to keep it secret from the delegation. Smith nevertheless told Allison, who determined that the U.S. would have to halt its Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) program if the proposal became official. It was subsequently dropped.¹⁰⁸ However, the JCS and the rest of the national security bureaucracy were largely impotent in the final negotiations.

Analysis

I. JCS Involvement:

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Doubletalk*, pp. 407-415; Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, pp. 250-251.

¹⁰⁶ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, pp. 429-431.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Toth, "U.S. Orders Study to Plan to Scrap All Ballistic Missiles," *Los Angeles Times* 21 November 1986, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, *Doubletalk*, pp. 414-415.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were formally involved in the interagency processes of both the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Despite the initial exclusion from the first interagency SALT group in the Johnson administration, the Chiefs were integrated into the process by the time the initial proposal was being negotiated in the national security bureaucracy. In the Nixon administration, formal involvement in the interagency process was not a sufficient condition for having a significant voice in formulating the U.S. SALT position because of Kissinger's "backchannel." However, for their support in the ratification phase, the Chiefs were rewarded in other areas.

Their advice was typically geared towards preserving U.S. strategic advantages relative to the Soviets, as opposed to seeing the larger strategic picture of international stability. This led the JCS to focus on what types of arms control proposals would be acceptable, as opposed to being the bold initiators of daring new arms control positions. As John Prados notes, "At a session of the Committee of Principals on March 14, 1967. . . [General] Wheeler expounded the JCS view of what arms control [measures] were acceptable."¹⁰⁹ This seems fairly logical given the mission of the JCS and the military to preserve the nation's security, as well as the conservative nature of military men generally.

In the end, the final SALT agreement contained several provisions which the JCS had adamantly opposed during the interagency process. The treaty limited ABM systems, solidified a Soviet advantage in launchers, and denied the United State the possibility of acquiring heavy ICBMs, such as the SS-18. Still, JCS involvement in the process did

¹⁰⁹ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 191.

yield tangible results in other areas. Admiral Moorer noted this when asked if the JCS were happy with the final SALT agreement:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff certainly do not agree in detail with all of the proposals and options established, but in that case we presented to the top decision-makers, through the Secretary of Defense, a very clear-cut position paper. Let us say, we're not virgins with respect to having recommendations turned down, as witness the beginning of the Vietnam War. But the Chiefs had a full opportunity to present their positions and by and large the position in the interim agreement was approved by the Chiefs *with assurances that we were going to move ahead with our special programs such as the Trident and the B-1's*. So, there was none of this conflict and this radical disagreement that people are talking about¹¹⁰ (emphasis mine).

II. Traits of the JCS Chairmen:

The personal characteristics of General Wheeler and Admiral Moorer were quite evident in their approaches to arms control formulation. General Wheeler was very capable in negotiating compromises within the JCS and the interagency process. Indeed, he is often credited with persuading the Chiefs to support the consideration of a SALT treaty. As Gerard Smith notes:

General Wheeler deserves a good deal of credit for the progress made in SALT. His courageous advocacy of a policy that was unwelcome to his military colleagues was an outstanding example of placing the national interest above the perceived advantages for the military services. Since then the Joint Chiefs have in general supported SALT.¹¹¹

Newhouse also notes the fact that Wheeler showed an awareness of the need to cooperate with the president and other elements of the bureaucracy. He notes how Wheeler dispensed with a joint staff group which was designed to protect JCS

¹¹⁰ Moorer, *Speeches and Statements*, p. 250.

¹¹¹ Smith, *Doubletalk*, p. 27.

interests on SALT, instead relying on the services of General Allison in the interagency process. Hence, the weight of the evidence suggests that Wheeler's actions before the bureaucracy were consistent with Betts' model of a "bureaucratic manipulator."

Admiral Moorer was more of an "organization man." Some observers contend that his lack of expertise on arms control and Washington politics, as well as his parochial inclination toward Navy interests, hampered military advice in the SALT process.¹¹² While he was involved in giving military advice on the arms control issue, many of his guidelines were not successful in changing the U.S. position. Indeed, Moorer seems to have traded away most of these positions for future defense funding projects. These "side payments," including an accelerated deployment of the Trident missile submarine, certainly benefited military interests, but they also were in exchange for an unequal number of strategic launchers in favor of the Soviet Union.

But these different traits do not appear to have significantly altered the ability of the JCS to influence policy in this case. Different administrations goals appear more relevant in this instance. For example, Wheeler's influence in the initial Nixon proposal was not nearly what it was under the Johnson administration. Also, it is not entirely fair to compare Wheeler's accomplishments under Johnson with Moorer's accomplishments under Nixon. After all, the Johnson administration, while heavily influenced by the JCS, was not ever submitted to the rigors of treaty negotiations. Whether Wheeler's positions in the Johnson administration would have survived the negotiations better than Moorer's

¹¹² Confidential interview. Also, Telephone Interview with ACDA Deputy Director Spurgeon Keeney, 17 December 1997.

proposals under Nixon is unclear. Certainly, Henry Kissinger did not believe so. In his memoirs, he notes that when the administration was first getting underway, there was a strong push from the bureaucracy to utilize the proposal created by the Johnson administration. And he admitted that it had the major advantage of having already been approved by the JCS. However, he had doubts about whether the Soviets would accept such a proposal.¹¹³

Conclusion:

JCS involvement in the Johnson administration highlights the organizational resources that the JCS enjoy as presidential advisors. Their support would be critical in obtaining public support and Senate ratification of any agreement, and to buy that support they were included in the formal policy process. However, the Johnson administration never began formal negotiations with the Soviets so it is unclear whether the JCS influence on the arms control treaty would have remained in the final agreement.

In the Nixon administration, the Chiefs were also formally involved in the interagency process. The exclusion of the Chiefs from the “backchannel” was a significant reduction in their substantive participation. Still, the Chiefs received a fair amount of compensation for the concessions they made. This is not to suggest that they accepted arms control positions solely on the basis of compensation, but they did appear to tolerate positions that were not their first choice. An exchange developed – support in the ratification process for continuing or increased funding for defense programs. This was a pattern which would also be present in future administrations.

¹¹³ Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 148.

Chapter 3

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks II

Introduction:

The second SALT agreement was designed to build on the achievements of the first by making further limitations on the strategic forces of each country. Indeed, the Carter administration came to Washington projecting an entirely new attitude and outlook on the foreign policy arena. One of those new visions was this enhanced desire for deep cuts in strategic nuclear arms. As Cyrus Vance noted, Carter was committed to “reversing, not simply curbing, the upward spiral of nuclear weapons.”¹ To that end, the talks that had progressed since 1972 under the Nixon and Ford administrations, began anew under the Carter administration.

Military advice during this time-period, as had been the case with previous administrations, was considered a relevant but not an important commodity. While not central players in the formulation process, the support of the JCS was still needed for Senate ratification. As the President himself noted, “I knew that when the SALT II treaty was submitted to the Senate for ratification, the testimony of (the JCS) would be most important.”² The amount of JCS involvement was high – they were fully integrated into the formal interagency process. But in terms of setting administration arms control

¹ Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 51.

² Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), p. 222.

policy, or even moderating the positions they opposed, the quality of JCS involvement was quite low. As Assistant to the Chairman, General William Y. Smith noted, “the Chiefs had the opportunity to participate in all of the decisions made, but that doesn’t mean that they were always happy with the outcome.”³

I. The Actors

Arms reductions was a high priority issue for President Jimmy Carter. He was committed to substantial arms reductions during his tenure both because he wanted to improve U.S. security and because he wanted to reduce superpower tensions. Carter believed that it was in the national interest for the United States to reduce Soviet heavy missiles, curtail the number of MIRVs on these missiles, and restrict the number of flight tests that would increase their accuracy. But he also believed that promoting détente was important. In a 1978 speech, he remarked:

We would prefer cooperation through a détente that increasingly involves similar restraints for both sides, similar readiness to resolve disputes by negotiations and not by violence. . . A competition without restraint and without shared rules will escalate into graver tensions, and our relationship will suffer. I do not wish this to happen. . .⁴

Unchecked, he saw the arms race as counterproductive to the superpower relationship.

Carter also saw a moral dimension to arms control. He believed that both the United States and the Soviet Union had an obligation to reduce tensions in order to address other global problems. As he noted, "by reducing the nuclear threat, not only will we make the

³ Telephone interview with former Assistant to the JCS Chairman General William Y. Smith, 15 January 1998.

world a safer place but we'll also free ourselves to concentrate on constructive action to give the world a better life."⁵ Indeed, his ultimate goal according to his inaugural address was "the elimination of all nuclear weapons from the Earth."⁶

General George Brown served as the Joint Chiefs Chairman from the beginning of the Carter administration until 21 June 1978. Appointed by Gerald Ford in 1974, Brown brought extensive Joint Staff and Washington experience to the position of JCS Chairman. He had served in several key Pentagon staff assignments during his career, including tours as Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Assistant to the JCS Chairman, and Air Force Chief of Staff.⁷ As a result, he understood the workings of the political process. As one of his colleagues at the JCS noted, "He knew government so damn well."⁸

By training and temperament, General Brown was not inclined to make military disagreements with the administration public. He was inclined to provide the administration with military advice and fight for his position, but in the end, he believed his final duty was to support the president that he served. Given that the administration often took positions that the chiefs objected to, many outside the process believed that the chiefs were weak. However, General Brown puts the role of the JCS in a different

⁴ President Jimmy Carter, "The United States and the Soviet Union (address made at the U.S. Naval Academy's commencement exercises in Annapolis, MD, 7 June 1978)", *State Department Bulletin* (July 1978), p. 16.

⁵ Jerel Rosati, *The Carter Administration's Quest for Global Community: Beliefs and Their Impact on Behavior* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), p. 47.

⁶ G.J. Lankevich, ed., *James E. Carter, 1924- Chronology-Documents-Biographical Aids* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications Inc., 1981), p. 81.

⁷ Willard Webb and Ronald Cole, *The Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington: Historical Division of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1989), pp. 89-91.

⁸ Mark Perry, *Four Stars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), p. 252.

perspective. He noted:

We do not. . . “go public” with dissenting views once a decision is made. Every senior military officer understands the rules of play. Give your best; say what you think; advocate a course of action – and when a decision is made, support it. If a decision is unacceptable, and an officer wishes to speak out publicly – fine. He can take off his uniform, leave active service, and express that disagreement.⁹

Because he was unwilling to employ political tactics, such as media leaks, the JCS was less successful in influencing the formulation of the SALT II treaty.

Philosophically, Brown viewed arms control as a method of increasing U.S. security by maintaining deterrence at lower costs. He saw the arms race as increasingly expensive with both sides having more than enough destructive power to eliminate each other. In numerous public speeches, Brown spoke of the “rough equivalence” in the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance. He stated that there were differences in numbers and types of launchers and munitions, and differences in size and accuracy of weapons, “But I believe both sides perceive some sense of balance.”¹⁰ As a result, Brown was interested in verifiable arms control agreements which could limit costs to the U.S. military while maintaining security.

However, General Brown was not interested in arms control agreements which constrained U.S. technological advantages and emerging weapons programs. Given the difficulty in verifying constraints on technology, Brown did not want the U.S. to agree to technology limitations which the Soviets might cheat on. As a result, he did not wish to see developing weapons programs such as the MX missile or the B-1 bomber sacrificed

⁹ George S. Brown, *Addresses and Statements of General George S. Brown, USAF, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1974-1978* (Washington: Department of Defense, 1978), pp. 279-280.

in the SALT II agreement. General Brown's previous experience helps to understand his position on this issue. From 1970 to 1973, he served as head of the Air Force Systems Command, an organization whose sole purpose was to explore strategic nuclear warfare and find new ways to exploit America's technological advantage over the Soviet Union.¹¹

General Brown retired from government service mid-way through the Carter administration. He was succeeded by another air force officer, General David Jones, who served as JCS Chairman for the rest of the Carter administration and the SALT II formulation debate. Jones did not differ from Brown radically on his arms control philosophy -- he also saw a rough equivalence between the superpowers and believed in limited and verifiable arms control positions which preserved ongoing strategic programs.¹² However, his approach to military advice rankled many of his colleagues. Despite having almost no joint staff experience, and little time in Washington, Jones had acquired a reputation for attempting to curry favor with his civilian superiors. For instance, as the U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) commander in 1973, Jones went out of his way to learn the personal hobbies of the visiting Defense Secretary. He hoped that by sparking a personal relationship, he would improve his chances for being promoted to Air Force Chief of Staff. And in the end, Jones got the appointment. As Perry notes, "the visit sealed Jones' appointment, but not because the two shared common policy

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 190-191, 203, 211.

¹¹ Perry, *Four Stars*, pp. 251-253.

¹² Senate Armed Services Committee, *Nominations of David C. Jones, Thomas B. Hayward, and Lew Allen, Jr.* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 18, 22 May 1978), pp. 8-15.

concerns."¹³ Hence, while General Jones did advocate policy views, he was more noted for his accommodating style with civilian superiors.

The National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski was certainly the most influential advisor in the SALT II process because of his formal position, as well as his personal relationship with the president. Carter and Brzezinski had known one another since Brzezinski had chaired the Trilateral Commission in 1973.¹⁴ He had also served as Carter's foreign policy advisor during the presidential campaign. As a result, there was a mutual trust, as well as a closer and warmer relationship than Carter enjoyed with other foreign policy advisors.¹⁵ He did not dominate the arms control formulation process in the fashion of Henry Kissinger in the SALT I debate. However, when coupled with his formal position as National Security Advisor, Brzezinski was a powerful force within the administration.

Philosophically, Brzezinski saw arms control as a mechanism for the United States to increase its strategic capabilities relative to the Soviet Union. He believed that the U.S. was losing its strategic advantage in the arms race. In an earlier work, Brzezinski argued that as long as the political enmity between the superpowers exists, it was in the interest of the weaker side to use arms control to get both greater equality in

¹³ Ibid., pp. 255-257.

¹⁴ Betty Glad, *Jimmy Carter: In Search of the Great White House* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980), p. 218-219. The future president met many of his future foreign policy advisors through the Trilateral Commission, including Cyrus Vance, Harold Brown, Walter Mondale and Paul Warnke.

¹⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Exit Interview, Jimmy Carter Library, 20 February 1981, pp. 4-6. See also, Garrison, p. 124.

power and even the opportunity to deceitfully change the balance of power.¹⁶ This philosophy had led him to criticize the SALT I agreement for formalizing the U.S. disadvantage in strategic launchers, despite the fact that he knew Congress would not fund a U.S. military build-up to match the Soviets. As Andrianopoulos notes, “Rejecting the view that U.S. technological superiority could offset the Soviet quantitative superiority, Brzezinski warned that it would be very difficult to undo this asymmetry once the U.S.S.R. erased its technological inferiority.”¹⁷ Brzezinski saw SALT II as a way to keep the Soviet Union from gaining a strategic advantage over the United States.

The National Security Advisor had something of an ally in the Pentagon with Harold Brown serving as Secretary of Defense. Acknowledged as one of the foremost scientists in the Pentagon since Robert McNamara, Harold Brown was often a positive force for Brzezinski in that he could use his technical expertise to rebut the arguments of his opponents within the administration, such as Cyrus Vance and Paul Warnke.¹⁸

Brown advocated a somewhat predictable view in that he believed that arms control could enhance U.S. security only if the United States maintained an effective nuclear capability that did not allow the Soviets a strategic advantage. He believed both arms modernization and arms control served the ultimate objective – U.S. strategic superiority. In a 1978 speech, he noted “an adequately and properly balanced Defense

¹⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 228.

¹⁷ Gerry A. Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski: The NSC and the Struggle for Control of U.S. National Security Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 117.

¹⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor* (New York: Farrar, Stratus, and Giroux, 1985), p. 44.

budget. . . is one way we assure our security against a Soviet military threat.”¹⁹ As a supplementary measure, arms control could be used to enhance U.S. superiority. During his confirmation hearings, he indicated that the Soviet Union did not have a strategic advantage over the United States and that a SALT II treaty was another way to maintain this arrangement.²⁰ In particular, Brown saw SALT II as a way to constrain Soviet advantages in land-based ICBMs.²¹

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was the most prominent administration advisor to advocate arms control primarily as a way to increase cooperation between the superpowers. Vance had long believed in the utility of détente. As he noted in 1977:

I think that détente does exist today, and I believe and hope it will continue to exist. I think it is in the interests of both of our nations to search for common ground and to lessen the tensions which divide the nations.²²

Vance was inclined to see any arms control agreement from the perspective of how it might also affect the Soviets.²³ He constantly reminded other advisors in the administration that the Soviet Union had national interests of its own to protect.²⁴

However, Vance's influence in the formulation process suffered because his views were often in conflict with Brzezinski's.

¹⁹ Harold Brown, “A Balanced and Effective Defense,” *State Department Current Policy* (No. 32) September 1978, pp. 4-5.

²⁰ Senate Armed Services Committee, *Nominations of Harold Brown and Charles W. Duncan, Jr.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 11 January 1977), pp. 8-10.

²¹ Jean Garrison, *The Games Advisors Play* (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of South Carolina, 1996), p. 131.

²² Rosati, *Carter Administration's Quest*, p. 54.

²³ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), pp. 48-57.

²⁴ Garrison, *Games Advisors Play*, p. 136.

The Director of ACDA and the head of the negotiating delegation, Paul Warnke, was an ally of Vance's arms control view. As Brzezinski noted, "Warnke's appointment (was) a strong signal of Carter's commitment to détente."²⁵ He believed that any arms control agreement would have to serve the security interests of both nations if it were to succeed. As a result, Warnke believed firmly in the view that arms control should only be used to further cooperation and stability between the superpowers. In addition, he did not have much tolerance for the opposing view. Warnke was openly impatient with those who saw sinister purposes behind every new piece of Soviet hardware or doctrinal propaganda. His pro-détente views and manner rankled some defense conservatives in the Senate. They expressed their displeasure in his confirmation. The vote was 58 to 40 - - enough to confirm Warnke as chief negotiator for the SALT II talks, but not enough to ratify a treaty.²⁶

II. Formal Structures

The Joint Chiefs of Staff and their Chairman were fully involved in the Carter administration's SALT II interagency process – even if that involvement did not allow many of their policy preferences to be included in the final document. The election in November 1976 brought several changes to the National Security Council and the associated staff. As John Endicott notes, "Zbigniew Brzezinski in his initial talks with President-elect Jimmy Carter learned that the new president had certain goals in mind for the NSC." One of these goals was to have an assertive NSC that would more adequately

²⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 11.

²⁶ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 56.

integrate defense department views in to the decision making process. As the new National Security Advisor, Brzezinski warmed to the task. He saw himself as a “protagonist, as well as a coordinator of policy.”²⁷

The Carter administration National Security Council was divided into two groups, with only one of these considering SALT issues. The JCS Chairman was present for both. The Special Coordinating Committee (SCC) was the main forum for discussions on SALT II. The SCC was designed to “deal with specific cross-cutting issues requiring coordination in the development of options and implementation of presidential decisions.”²⁸ Indeed, it was largely responsible for the NSC-level decisions. As one observer noted, “The SCC was where most NSC decisions were made – the full NSC rarely met.”²⁹ With reference to arms control, the SCC essentially replaced the old Verification Panel of the Nixon-Ford period, although this body was charged with formulating some non-SALT policies, as well. Chaired by Brzezinski, the SCC retained essentially the same membership and SALT policy-formulating functions as the Verification Panel but with several substantial differences. Probably the primary contrast was that the principle agencies involved with this body were given more opportunity to present their institutional roles on the issues. The President’s NSA, Zbigniew Brzezinski,

²⁷ John Endicott, “The National Security Council: Formalized Coordination and Policy Planning” in *National Security Policy*, Robert Pfaltzgraph and Uri Ra’anan, eds. (Medford, Massachusetts: Archon Books, 1984), pp. 179-180.

²⁸ Presidential Directive/NSC-2, 20 January 1977, National Security Archives (President Carter Directives), Washington, D.C.

²⁹ Telephone interview with ACDA Director Paul Warnke, 12 February 1998.

also tended to play the role of “referee” among equals, as opposed to being the dominant force in policy formulation as seen in the Nixon administration.³⁰ As Prados notes:

[Brzezinski] proceeded quite methodically to build the SALT options decision. The SCC discussed several alternatives, and set-up ad hoc working groups to develop packages for each alternative. At the SCC sessions, Brzezinski deliberately tried to balance hards and softs by the order in which he called on them to speak. [He] reserved final say for Cy Vance, then summarized and reported the SCC deliberations to the president.³¹

The process was intentionally designed to avoid the worst aspects of the Nixon system – particularly the “backchannel.” Carter went to great lengths to assure those involved in the formal formulation process that their efforts would not be undercut. This is evident in the SCC meeting held on 3 February 1977 in which the President not only affirmed his commitment to the JCS that he would not put forward positions without adequate prior consultations, but also that he would not permit the circumvention of normal discussions.³²

Just below the SCC was the SALT Working Group. Established by the Carter administration, this body had the same basic duties and responsibilities for support of the SCC as did the old Verification Panel Working Group. Its interagency membership continued to parallel that of the old VPWG, and it was chaired by a senior NSC staff representative – typically Deputy National Security Advisor David Aaron. This group

³⁰ Thomas Wolfe, *The SALT Experience* (Cambridge: Ballinger, 1979), p.42.

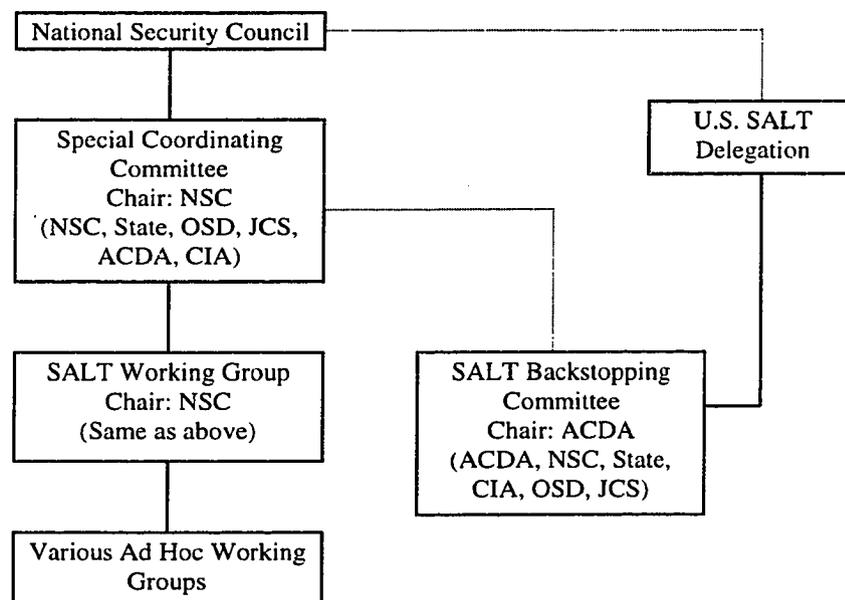
³¹ John Prados, *Keeper of the Keys: History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), p. 390.

³² Summary Report for your Information and Reaction of the Special Coordinating Committee Meeting, 3 February 1977; Folder: “USSR-U.S. Conference 1994, USSR-ND 6/77,” Vertical File, Jimmy Carter Library.

had no formal subgroups for SALT tasks, but ad hoc working groups were occasionally assembled to deal with specific issues and then disbanded.³³

The SALT Backstopping Committee remained with members from ACDA, NSC, OSD, JCS, and CIA. Chaired by Deputy Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Spurgeon Keeney, this body was carried over from the previous administration with its functions remaining essentially as they had been. That is, to transmit guidance on SALT issues and provide daily support for the on-site delegation in Geneva. However, the activities of the Backstopping Committee were carried out in a less structured fashion and with much less referral of problems up the line to the level of the SCC, as had been the case under Kissinger's system.

Chart 3. US Interagency Process for SALT II in the Carter Administration³⁴



³³ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 38.

As to the on-site delegation, the Carter administration introduced changes which affected both the composition of this body and its manner of operation. The first significant move was to return to the original SALT I organization principle of having the ACDA director also serve as the chief SALT negotiator – roles that were allotted to Paul Warnke.³⁵ Ralph Earle, an ACDA official with prior service as a SALT delegate, was appointed to head the on-site delegation when Warnke was absent.³⁶ The Joint Chiefs were represented on the delegation by Lieutenant General Edward Rowny, an army engineer who replaced General Allison after the ratification of the SALT I accords.

General Rowny's personal qualities and views often-times offended other delegation members and presented an additional complication for the chiefs. General Rowny was a very conservative and outspoken individual, and his relations with the other delegation members suffered as a result. One senior military official, while noting that Rowny was very protective of military interests, noted, "He came on awfully strong."³⁷ As a result of this, his relationship with Ambassador Warnke suffered. Indeed, Warnke believed that retired Lieutenant George Seignious, the at-large member of the delegation, was a better representative of JCS interests.³⁸ While some discount this assertion, it highlights the tension which existed between the JCS Representative and the Head of the Delegation.

³⁴ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 37.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁶ This arrangement continued until October 1978 when Ambassador Warnke resigned. He was replaced as the ACDA Director by Lieutenant General George Seignious, but Ralph Earle succeeded Warnke as head of the on-site delegation.

³⁷ Confidential telephone interview with Senior Military Official, 19 February 1998.

³⁸ Warnke interview, 12 February 1998.

Rowny also highlighted another problem related to representing the JCS – he used his position to benefit conservative allies outside of the military. As one official noted, “Rowny very definitely was not just working for the Chiefs.” In particular, he relayed unofficial JCS deliberations on arms control to his conservative supporters in Washington.³⁹ These were probably the Committee on the Present Danger and the Madison Group, two organizations which he formally joined upon his retirement in August 1979.⁴⁰ The result of this and his poor relations with the on-site delegation head led to friction in the SALT II negotiation process.⁴¹

Another personnel change for the on-site delegation, taken in June 1977 at the invitation of Warnke, was the appointment of twelve Congressmen and twenty-five Senators to serve as congressional advisors to the SALT delegation. Many of these individuals actually sat in on the negotiating sessions with the Soviets.⁴² Such congressional exposure to the actual negotiations had been suggested in the Nixon administration, but had not been implemented due to the objections of Kissinger.⁴³ These individuals were not central to the negotiations, but it was hoped having congressional

³⁹ Confidential telephone interview with Senior Military Official, 19 February 1998.

⁴⁰ In the nomination of General Jones as JCS Chairman in 1978, Senator Jesse Helms spoke of a “distinguished military leader” who had visited his office to raise concerns over arms control policy. Given Senator Helms’ association with the Madison Group, this military leader was probably General Rowny. See, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Nominations of David C. Jones, Thomas B. Hayward, and Lew Allen, Jr.* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 18, 22 May 1978), p. 53.

⁴¹ Telephone interview with former ACDA Director Ambassador George Signious, 20 February 1998.

⁴² “Congressmen Debate Own Role as Advisors in SALT Treaty,” *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 21 November 1977, p. 14.

⁴³ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 38.

input during the negotiations might ease the ratification debate. However, given the problems that SALT II suffered during the ratification process, that hope was forlorn.

One final point that is worth noting is the active participation of President Carter in the formulation process. Almost from the very beginning, Carter came to commit an inordinate amount of time to the SALT effort. He would meet frequently with his key advisers on Saturday mornings, in sessions lasting sometimes as much as two or three hours. He carefully monitored the work of the SCC, which met with increasing frequency, and on which Brzezinski would report to him the same day a given meeting occurred. Carter would also review the instructions that were sent to the on-site delegation in Geneva with great care.⁴⁴ This activity also extended to keeping the support of the JCS. Brzezinski noted that Carter would often meet with the JCS in order to reduce their concerns and solicit their support for the administration's proposals.⁴⁵

III. Impact of the Joint Chiefs in the Formulation Process

A. 1977-1978, Formulation During General Brown's Tenure

The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not enjoy a great deal of success in the arms control formulation process during the Carter years. This is not to say that the chiefs lost on every point. However, most of the issues which General Brown and the JCS felt strongly about did not end in a favorable decision for the military. Still, the JCS supported the final product before the U.S. Senate. This was partly due to the philosophy of General Brown to not publicly criticize administration decisions. Concessions from the President

⁴⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 166.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

on certain military programs, as well as the arrival of a new JCS Chairman in 1978 who was more loyal to the administration, also aided the JCS in supporting SALT II.

The first discussions on arms control proposals actually began before the Carter administration formally took office. In his first meeting with the chiefs in December 1976, the President-elect asked General Brown and the JCS what would be the minimum force of strategic nuclear missiles necessary to deter war between the superpowers.⁴⁶ In particular, the Chiefs were stunned when Carter asked, "What would it take to get down to a few hundred?" Given the fact that each side had several thousand nuclear weapons, this proposal was a radically different line of thought for U.S. policy. At this point, the JCS understood that they were dealing with a very different commander-in-chief. The President-elect requested that the Chiefs undertake an early, quick analysis of the implications of such a proposal.⁴⁷

After the meeting, the General Brown approached Defense Secretary Brown, arguing that cuts in the U.S. nuclear arsenal would not only be difficult to effect, they might be downright dangerous. Still, the JCS replied to this presidential request with a study of the issue. They questioned the wisdom of such a proposal on several fronts, citing the significant risks to U.S. national strategy if such proposals were adopted. In particular, they questioned whether deterrence would exist at such levels, and whether such a reduction would cause the Soviets to reevaluate their first-strike strategy. They also argued that "deep reductions would increase incentives to cheat and place a degree of

⁴⁶ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 43.

⁴⁷ Memorandum from Harold Brown to the President, "Implications of Major Reductions in Strategic Nuclear Forces," 28 January 1977, briefing packet from the SALT II and the

reliance on verification which U.S. capabilities do not warrant.”⁴⁸ To this end, the President let the proposal die. However, given the president's personal commitment to substantive new cuts in arms control, this would not be the last proposal of this kind.

The next opportunity came with the formulation of the initial U.S. SALT II position. With the new administration formally in place, Carter could test the more-open NSC process that he had engineered in order to avoid the worst effects of the Kissinger system. The central question which served as the jumping-off point was the decision of whether or not to fashion a proposal based on the agreements obtained from the Ford administration or to attempt a completely new agreement. The Ford administration, while not concluding a formal agreement with the Soviets, did pass along almost fifty pages of draft treaty text that had already been jointly agreed on with the Soviets.⁴⁹ Hence, the Carter administration inherited a nearly completed agreement from the previous administration. However, there was a strong feeling within the Carter administration that they could not “take ownership” of this proposal.⁵⁰ As a result, there was a significant inclination to start from scratch – to attempt a more ambitious arms control proposal unrelated to the previous agreement in Vladivostok.

Yet, the gains achieved during the Ford administration in arms control were significant. In the Vladivostok meeting, agreements were reached that limited both sides

Growth of Mistrust Conference, May 6-9, 1994 Carter-Brezhnev Project, Vertical File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁸ Memorandum from General George Brown to Harold Brown, “Implications of Major Reductions in Strategic Nuclear Forces,” 17 March 1977, briefing packet from the SALT II and the Growth of Mistrust Conference, May 6-9, 1994 Carter-Brezhnev Project, Vertical File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁹ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 219. This completed text portion was the basis for the frequently-cited “90 percent complete” figure.

to a total of 2400 delivery vehicles. Also, as a sublimit to this total, MIRVed launchers were restricted to 1320. One point which concerned the chiefs was the exclusion of the Soviet Backfire bomber from this 2400 delivery-vehicle limit. The Ford administration agreed to accept that the Backfire would be employed only in a non-strategic role, despite its intercontinental range. Another significant issue for the chiefs was the Soviet monopoly on the possession of Modern Large Ballistic Missiles (MLBMs). In an *aide-memoire* after Vladivostok, Kissinger agreed that the Soviets could maintain their heavy ICBM missiles in exchange for the U.S. maintaining its Forward Based Systems. Clearly, the Ford administration had accomplished a great deal, despite the fact that they had not concluded a treaty. What is more, the Soviets were happy with the agreement negotiated during the Ford years and were not interested in scrapping this work in favor of anything more ambitious.

However, in early 1977, the Carter administration began to examine arms control positions which were significantly different from the Vladivostok accords. The Pentagon favored a variation known as “Vladivostok-Plus” – that is, the Vladivostok accord plus a separate but accompanying accommodation on Backfire. As to what kind of accommodation, there remained a split between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The General Brown and the chiefs took their traditional hard line, pressing for the Backfire to be counted as a strategic weapon. OSD acknowledged the ambiguous status of Backfire but wanted to make sure that the long-range ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCM), a comparably ambiguous weapon system being developed by the U.S., would be treated equally under SALT II. OSD, in short, urged a

⁵⁰ Confidential telephone interview with NSC Official, 26 January 1998.

tradeoff between Backfires and GLCMs.⁵¹ This was because the civilians at the Pentagon were not tied to restricting the Backfire bomber – indeed, some thought it unrealistic. For instance, Deputy Assistant Secretary Walter Slocombe noted that he never believed that the Backfire would be included in any SALT agreement.⁵²

The Vladivostok-Plus option also included a trade-off between Soviet heavy intercontinental ballistic missiles, of which there were approximately 300, and U.S. heavy bombers armed with air-launched cruise missiles. This was in effect the prototype of a proposal that would find its way back onto the negotiating table in a variety of versions for many months to come. This position would also have lowered somewhat the ceiling of 2,400 total strategic systems and 1,320 multiple-warhead launchers.⁵³

While the Vladivostok-Plus package was the preferred package of the military, many of the senior decision-makers had other plans. As Strobe Talbott notes, “Carter, Brzezinski, David Aaron, and Harold Brown thought that the Vladivostok and Vladivostok-Plus proposals were insufficiently imaginative and ambitious.”⁵⁴ Their desire for deep cuts had several different motivations. Brzezinski was interested in testing Soviet sincerity towards arms control; Brown wanted to halt the growing Soviet advantage in land-based ICBMs.⁵⁵ What these central decision makers did have in common was a desire to pursue an initial U.S. position which radically departed from the Vladivostok agreement.

⁵¹ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 46.

⁵² Telephone interview with former Deputy Assistant Secretary Walter Slocombe, 31 March 1998.

⁵³ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 47.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Garrison, *Games Advisors Play*, pp. 131-134.

The comprehensive proposal took several bold new measures in the area of strategic arms control. First, it proposed that both sides reduce their total number of delivery vehicles to 2000 or 1800, as opposed to the 2400 proposed at Vladivostok. It also proposed reducing the MIRVed launcher limit from 1320 proposed at Vladivostok to 1200 or 1100. Further, within this MIRV limit, MIRVed ICBMs were limited to 550, and MLBMs were limited to 150 for the Soviets and none for the United States. Also, technological improvements to existing ICBMs and research on future systems were prohibited. With regard to cruise missiles, the comprehensive proposal called for a 2500 km limit with the understanding that cruise missiles with a range between 600 km and 2500 km would only be carried by heavy bombers. Finally, with respect to the Backfire bomber, the U.S. would not label it a heavy bomber and therefore exclude it from the aggregate total of launchers, provided that the Soviet Union gave high-level assurances that the bomber would not be used as a strategic vehicle. This would benefit U.S. strategic superiority because it prevented the Backfire from becoming an ALCM carrier. Only heavy bombers were allowed to carry ALCMs.

The United States delegation also carried a fall-back position to the March 1977 meeting. This proposal was not to be disclosed until the Soviets had made some concessions to the U.S. position in the initial proposal. Presented to the NSC by Secretary Vance in February, this proposal was based on a less stringent version of the Vladivostok proposal. It reflected the views of Secretary of State Vance and Ambassador Warnke that the administration should try to secure a quick SALT II treaty based on

Vladivostok before pushing for deeper reductions in a SALT III treaty.⁵⁶ Since this proposal was fashioned completely by the State Department and ACDA, it raised some concerns in the Pentagon. As General Edward Rowny noted:

None of us in the Pentagon had been consulted. I expressed opposition to the idea on principal. . . Furthermore, I argued, since it is virtually impossible to keep a secret in Washington, the Soviets were certain to catch wind of the fallback position and simply ignore our primary offer.⁵⁷

However, Carter allowed for this proposal to proceed, so long as it was understood that the preferred U.S. position was the comprehensive proposal.⁵⁸

As might be expected, there was some interagency disagreement in attempting to formulate the initial negotiating position of the Carter administration. By mid-March 1977, the real stumbling block within the interagency process remained the Backfire bomber and cruise missile issues. The State Department and ACDA favored an accommodating posture, one which in effect exempted the Backfire and imposed strict limits on the cruise missile. The Joint Chiefs, with the support of the Secretary of Defense, took an almost diametrically opposing view.⁵⁹

The Backfire Bomber issue was one of the most prominent concerns of the JCS in the SALT II formulation process. The military wanted it included in any agreement on strategic arms because its range and weapons capacity gave it value as an intercontinental weapon. However, the Soviets disputed the US data (on range and payload) and claimed that the Backfire was a medium bomber, and thus should be excluded. During the entire tenure of the Carter administration, the JCS was never successful in getting the

⁵⁶ Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁷ Edward Rowny, *It Takes One to Tango* (Washington: Brassey's, 1992), p. 103.

⁵⁸ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 62.

administration to forward a proposal which would include the Backfire bomber in the SALT II agreement. In time, President Carter accepted a promise from Brezhnev not to increase the radius of action nor the annual production rate (understood to be 30 per year) of the Backfire -- a promise that General Rowny, termed "militarily worthless."⁶⁰

The chiefs were also interested in the preservation of the cruise missile. This was an emerging weapon system where the United States enjoyed a large technological advantage over the Soviets. The military valued this advantage and argued that any arms control proposal that the U.S. offered in SALT II should not significantly constrain the production and deployment of this new weapon system.

The cruise missile was originally developed more for its political implications than its military necessity. As Lloyd Jensen notes, "Perhaps the best illustration of how a military bargaining chip can force the development of unneeded weapons and, in turn, impede the prospects for arms control, is found in the development of the cruise missile."⁶¹ According to John W. Finney, it was Secretary of State Kissinger who proposed that the Pentagon undertake development of long-range cruise missiles as a bargaining chip for the SALT II negotiations.⁶² However, the military came to see their creation as too valuable to sacrifice to the Soviets. The attachment of the military to this

⁵⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 158.

⁶⁰ Jeffrey S. McKittrick, "Arms Control and the Joint Chiefs of Staff," *Parameters: Journal of the U.S. Army War College*, Vol. 14 (no. 3) 1984, p. 69.

⁶¹ Lloyd Jensen, *Bargaining for National Security* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 180.

⁶² John Finney, "Cruise Missiles Provoke Conflict with the Military as Well as with Soviets," *New York Times* 21 January 1976, p. A1.

new system irritated Kissinger. He once remarked, “Those geniuses . . . think the goddamn thing is a cure for cancer and the common cold.”⁶³

Regardless of how the cruise missile came into being, the military wanted to limit any restrictions that might arise from the SALT II treaty. Indeed, in a March 2nd SCC meeting, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Holloway, standing-in for General Brown, indicated that the JCS opposed the counting of heavy bombers equipped with long-range ALCMs in the MIRV total.⁶⁴ The JCS also opposed any proposal which would place restrictions on ground- and sea-launched cruise missiles – two systems that the military expected to field in the early 1980’s. In broad terms, the JCS position was upheld. The administration preserved the ALCMs, though at a different range than the military preferred. The ground- and sea-launched varieties were also not restricted in the SALT II treaty – but their deployment was banned in the attached protocol for a period of three years. Given the fact that the missiles would not be deployed until 1983, the JCS could live with this restriction. Hence, the military was partially successful in defending its positions on cruise missiles.

Of course, Backfire bombers and cruise missiles were not the only issues that were of particular concern to the JCS regarding the initial SALT II proposal. Two other areas of concern were the limitation of the Soviet MLBM capability, as well as the continued improvements to the U.S. ICBM force.

The JCS felt very strongly that the Soviet MLBM forces should be reduced or otherwise compensated for. With their capability to carry large numbers of warheads,

⁶³ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 35.

these were the missiles which most concerned the Chiefs. The Chiefs were also concerned about the fact that the SALT I agreement had given the Soviets a unilateral right to these weapons. Despite the contention of some that it was unrealistic, the JCS pressed for some way to counterbalance this Soviet advantage.⁶⁵

The administration position did not completely address the concerns of the JCS. As one observer noted, “the Joint Chiefs were concerned [about the comprehensive proposal] because the proposal called for a 50 percent reduction in the heavy SS-18 missile instead of their complete elimination.”⁶⁶ However, the JCS showed a willingness to settle for restrictions on Soviet MLBMs. This, in conjunction with deep cuts in Soviet land-based ICBM forces were the main points which sold the JCS on the comprehensive proposal. As Talbott notes, “even those military planners who were unhappy about . . . (the inclusion of) the Backfire in the comprehensive proposal had to concede that deep reductions in the Soviet heavy and land-based MIRV forces were much more important.”⁶⁷

The chiefs were also disappointed with the comprehensive proposal’s stance on weapons modernization. The comprehensive proposal advocated the suspension of all ICBM upgrades on both sides, as well as a ban on developing new mobile ICBMs. This attempt to restrict modernization was a relatively new phenomenon, as modernization had been treated as nearly sacrosanct by both sides in treaties hitherto.⁶⁸ However, the Carter

⁶⁴ Special Coordinating Committee Meeting, March 2, 1977, “SALT,” Folder: “USSR-US Conference 1994, USSR-ND 6/77,” Vertical File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁵ McKittrick, “Arms Control and the JCS,” p. 69.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 62. See also, Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, p. 391.

⁶⁸ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 222.

administration signaled a willingness to forego the MX missile, a new ICBM that could “be extremely threatening” to the Soviet Union during the early 1980s because it would provide “first strike capability against...land-based systems.”⁶⁹ This was not a very prominent issue, and Carter was later to reverse this stance on the MX, but it was another issue where the chiefs failed to have any significant policy success.

In examining JCS involvement in the formulation of the comprehensive proposal, the Joint Chiefs were present at all of the interagency discussions, despite the fact that they were not successful in pushing their view on every policy issue. Indeed, Brzezinski notes in his memoirs how the JCS were persuaded to support the administration. In a March 22nd NSC meeting, the President led a discussion that was largely designed to obtain JCS support for the comprehensive proposal. Brzezinski notes:

I was quite impressed by the way Carter massaged the JCS. On the one hand, he made a number of statements which seemed to indicate his concerns for things that the JCS stress – on-site verification, no free ride for the Soviets with regard to Backfire, and yet in all he was able to put through proposals which have rather different consequences insofar as the specific items are concerned.⁷⁰

Carter certainly had other constituencies to mollify, as well. As Prados notes, “[at the 22 March NSC meeting], he steered a careful course between the JCS and State, in a largely successful attempt to keep all his Indians on the reservation.”⁷¹ However, what is evident from the Brzezinski passage is that despite the quantity of JCS participation in the construction of the comprehensive proposal, the results of that participation were somewhat lacking. They were not successful in pursuing many of their preferred policy

⁶⁹ Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington: Brookings Institute, 1985), p. 810.

⁷⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 160.

positions, and many of the preceding accounts suggest that they were a constituency to consider in the interagency process, but not a force to reckon with.

But the Joint Chiefs were not the only ones who did not like the initial U.S. proposal. In the March 1977 meetings in Moscow, the comprehensive proposal went over like a lead balloon with the Soviets. It called for little change in planned U.S. ICBM programs, other than the canceling of accuracy improvements on existing systems and research on the MX missile. However, for the Soviets, the comprehensive proposal was much more costly. It required them to make major cuts in their deployed ICBM forces, as well as cessation of several active modernization programs. As Thomas Wolfe notes:

From the perspective of the Russian leaders, the substantive content of the comprehensive proposal doubtless came across as an effort to spike their guns in the field of ICBM competition – where they had the strongest position and the biggest investment in ongoing programs – while also trying to keep the rest of the strategic competition channeled in directions where the United States enjoyed technological and operational advantages, such as strategic systems employing seaborne and airborne launch platforms.⁷²

When the U.S. presented its positions in Moscow, they were firmly rejected by the Soviets, leaving the U.S. to formulate a new proposal.

The next proposal to emanate from the Carter administration came in May 1977 and was known as the Three-Tier proposal. This was a compromise arrangement that might be viewed as an amalgam of the Vladivostok formula and the two U.S. alternative proposals that were rejected in Moscow. The purpose of this proposal was to

⁷¹ Prados, *Keeper of the Keys*, p. 391.

⁷² Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 223.

accommodate both the Soviet desire to retain the Vladivostok guidelines for an agreement and the U.S. preference for more comprehensive limitations in SALT II.⁷³

The proposal's three parts were interdependent. First, there would be a Vladivostok-based treaty that would run through 1985. Second, there would be a protocol attached to the treaty, allowing for additional time to handle such contentious issues as cruise missiles, Backfire bombers, mobile ICBM limitations, and qualitative constraints on ICBMs. This protocol would last three years and any limitations set down in the protocol would be subject to further negotiation in the next round of SALT negotiations. Finally, the last tier called for a joint statement of principles, to provide an agreed set of guidelines for the SALT III negotiations. This next round of negotiations would call for further substantial reductions and other constraints on strategic arms.⁷⁴

The three-tier framework, though presented in May, did not bear fruit until September 1977 when Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko visited for talks with President Carter and Secretary of State Vance. With the major obstacles overcome by this meeting, the three-tier proposal effectively replaced Vladivostok as the basis for substantial intensive negotiations over the next year.⁷⁵ During this time, the differences were gradually narrowed, bringing a SALT II accord close to the final stages of completion by the end of 1978.⁷⁶

Most of the positions relevant to the JCS remain unchanged in the Three-Tier framework – this is largely due to the fact that the most of the Pentagon was left out of

⁷³ *The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks*, Special Report no. 46, The Department of State, July 1978, p.7.

⁷⁴ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, pp. 224-225.

⁷⁵ Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 58-61.

the formulation of the Three-Tier framework.⁷⁷ The JCS position on Backfire was still overruled, but ALCM-equipped bombers were not to be counted in the MIRV total as the Soviets demanded. The U.S. was also continuing to call for the Soviets to halve their heavy ICBM force.

During this time period, a defense policy announcement by the administration was to profoundly affect the military's position on SALT II. The development of the B-1 bomber was intimately bound-up in the cruise missile debate – it was particularly useful in explaining why the JCS was in favor of a more restrictive range limit on ALCMs than OSD and the President. During the early 1977 debate within the Carter administration over the permissible range of air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs), when OSD favored 2500 kilometers, the JCS favored a 1500 kilometer limit, because they calculated that the Air Force would then be certain to procure the B-1 bomber. As Dougherty notes, “the JCS had suspected from the start that the cruise missile would be used to justify prolonging the life of the aging B-52s, and that is exactly what the Carter administration did when it canceled the B-1 bomber program.”⁷⁸ Indeed, many in the JCS noted that the more restrictive range on ALCMs did not make any sense if the B-1 bomber was not brought into service. As one JCS Officer noted, “[supporting the lower limit] was sure-fire insurance that we would get the B-1.”⁷⁹ However, the administration felt that by giving the military more than it requested on cruise missile ranges, they might get their

⁷⁶ Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 226.

⁷⁷ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 85.

⁷⁸ James Dougherty, *JCS Reorganization and U.S. Arms Control Policy* (Washington: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., 1986), p. 20.

⁷⁹ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 61.

support. When asked about the extension of the cruise missile range to 2500 km, Zbigniew Brzezinski stated that it was “the only way to get the Chiefs on board.”⁸⁰

And the greater range limit on ALCMs was used as part of the justification to cancel the B-1 project in June 1977. Seeing the B-1 and ALCMs as two separate alternatives to penetrating Soviet airspace, Carter apparently decided to cancel the more expensive project. Few of Carter’s own advisers claimed to understand the timing of the decision, and few found it comfortable to support or easy to defend.⁸¹ For instance, many did not understand why Carter had not used the B-1 as a bargaining chip in the SALT II negotiations, as the Office of Management and Budget had recommended.⁸² It also placed much more emphasis on the ALCM issue. As one official in the State Department noted, “In the Alice-in-Wonderland world of SALT. . . the decision sent the Pentagon brass up the wall and endowed the cruise missile issue with a political hysteria that was not helpful.”⁸³

With Carter’s decision to cancel the B-1 bomber, the position of the JCS on the arms control negotiations was bound to change. In particular, they revised their position on ALCM range limits. The previous position of 1500km was insufficient – the JCS now agreed with the administration that ALCMs should have a limit of not less than 2500km.⁸⁴

Carter did attempt to make amends in the wake of the B-1 cancellation. The return of the MX missile was a way for Carter to attempt to repair the damaged relations with the JCS and congressional conservatives. Carter had earlier proposed canceling the

⁸⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 160.

⁸¹ See Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 57-58.

⁸² Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 268.

⁸³ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 106.

MX missile program in exchange for a fifty percent reduction in Soviet SS-18's -- a proposition that the Soviets dismissed as a propaganda ploy. His decision to resume development of the MX missile was seen as a concession to the military and congressional hard liners who had believed that by deploying the missile, it could be used as a bargaining chip in the SALT negotiations.⁸⁵

Hence, as the SALT II process continued into 1978, the JCS and its Chairman had not been a driving force in the SALT II formulation process. No major position by the administration was taken solely on the basis of the advice from the JCS. What is more, what positions the JCS were able to affect in the interagency process, were subsequently compromised in the negotiations with the Soviets. In the September 1978 negotiations, the United States gave in to the Soviets on two important JCS positions. First, the United States withdrew its demand that the Soviets reduce their heavy ICBM force by half. The Soviets had consistently resisted the U.S. effort to restrict a right to deploy the entire SS-18 force that they had won in the SALT I talks. The second issue was the inclusion of ALCM-equipped bombers in the MIRV total – a position which the Chiefs had opposed and the U.S. had resisted through the first two rounds of negotiations. The JCS had been minimally successful in getting their policy positions addressed in the interagency process, but most of these proposals were discarded in the attempt to negotiate an agreement with the Soviets.

⁸⁴ Warnke interview, 12 February 1998.

⁸⁵ Perry, *Four Stars*, pp. 270-271.

B. 1978-1979, Formulation During General Jones' Tenure

The appointment of General David Jones to the position of JCS Chairman increased the activism of the JCS in the SALT II process. The chiefs were not completely impassive in the remaining days of SALT II. In contradiction to those who argue that the military are not initiators in arms control policy⁸⁶, General David Jones proposed a solution to the impasse over the Backfire Bomber in September 1978. His solution was known as “count or counter.” The plan proposed that either the Backfire bomber be counted in the SALT II treaty – as the JCS continued to prefer – or the U.S. would counter the Backfire threat with increased air defenses and defensive aircraft.⁸⁷ Of course, to counter the Backfire would entail additional defense expenditures, and initial estimates suggested that they would be significant. In time, the “counter” portion was changed to a capability that the U.S. could build a bomber that had similar specifications to the Backfire. The Soviets were amenable to this proposal since it kept the Backfire bomber from being included in the SALT totals in exchange for the U.S. to have the option to build a similar bomber in the future.⁸⁸ Disputes continued over exactly how many Backfires a year the Soviets would be allowed to produce and what assurances they might provide, but the “count or counter” proposal of General Jones went a long way towards removing the issue of the Backfire as an obstacle to the SALT II agreement.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ James McManamon, “The Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Arms Control Policy Process,” (M.A. Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1987), p. 87. See also, Dougherty, *JCS Reorganization*, p. vii.

⁸⁷ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 214.

⁸⁸ Jensen, *Bargaining for National Security*, p. 179.

⁸⁹ Talbott, *Endgame*, p. 214.

General Jones was less successful in the area of encryption. This did not become a prominent obstacle until late 1978 when the two sides were close to agreement. As ACDA Director George Signious⁹⁰ noted, by the time the verification issue came to the fore, most of the other military issues had been settled.⁹¹ But as that time drew near, verification of the agreement became a central question. One of the main verification issues was the ability to monitor the missile tests of the other side. Such information provided data on how much progress the opposing side had made on missile range, accuracy, and payload. The problem was that both sides had taken active measures to deny this information to the other. This was done primarily through encoding the data that was transmitted from the test missile. This encryption presented a problem in verifying any arms control agreement, and the JCS took a strong position for a complete ban on encryption in missile telemetry data. They were joined in this position by the intelligence community who would be charged with verifying any agreement.⁹²

This strong position on verification was consistent with the Carter administration's position in the beginning. However, as an agreement drew closer, the encryption issue began to be seen by many in the U.S. government as a barrier to agreement. By early 1979, many in ACDA and State were willing to accept a reduced

⁹⁰ Formerly the At-Large Member, Lieutenant General Signious was selected to succeed the retiring Ambassador Warnke as head of ACDA (but not as head of the SALT II delegation) in late-1978.

⁹¹ Signious interview, 20 February 1998.

⁹² Indeed, Harold Brown contended that the intelligence community was more obstinate on this position than the JCS. Telephone interview with former Defense Secretary Harold Brown, 10 February 1998.

position on encryption to conclude the agreement.⁹³ Lieutenant General Rowny noted the division in the U.S. bureaucracy on the issue:

Anxious to have a treaty in hand, Secretary Vance was ready to cut a deal. Knowing that the Joint Chiefs felt strongly on the matter, I was not willing to give in. . . Not wishing to be blamed for making a decision on the spot, Vance referred the matter to Washington. The National Security Council's response was a masterpiece of bureaucratic fence-straddling. It decided that the Soviets could not encrypt telemetry pertaining to an agreed-upon list of missile performance characteristics contained in the text of the treaty. . . [Of] the ten performance indicators that we specified should not be encrypted, the Soviets only accepted the five that we could already ascertain by other means. The remaining five, all critical elements in technical assessments of missile capability, could be encrypted.⁹⁴

Removing deliberate concealment techniques would have benefited the United States more in verifying Soviet compliance, in spite the costs of reciprocity. But encryption remained largely intact in the SALT II treaty. As a result, the Chiefs were again included but not successful in altering the U.S. negotiating position.

Analysis

I. JCS Involvement

McKittrick notes that the JCS had four major concerns in SALT II. They desired a limit on MIRVed missile launchers to 1250; they wanted the Backfire bomber included in the Soviet aggregate; they wanted land- and sea-based cruise missiles excluded from the treaty; and they wanted some way to balance the Soviet's unilateral right to MLBMs.⁹⁵ Of course, the debate over encryption was also important to the Chiefs.

In the end, the final document reflected some, but not all, of these objectives. The

⁹³ Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 111-112.

⁹⁴ Rowny, *It Takes One*, p. 116.

MIRV number is close, particularly when you consider that the final figure of 1320 includes ALCM-capable heavy bombers which the JCS did not include in its proposal. They were also successful in keeping GLCMs and SLCMs out of the SALT II treaty – though they were banned for three years in the attached protocol. However, in many other cases, they were completely unsuccessful in having their policy preferences reflected in the final document – General William Y. Smith noted that the JCS was most unhappy about the Backfire bomber, air-launched cruise missile, and encryption issues.⁹⁶ JCS Chairman General Jones also noted in the ratification debate that the exclusion of the Backfire was a concern to the Chiefs. He further expressed JCS concern over the Soviets' unilateral right to retain MLBMs. However, General Jones ultimately endorsed the treaty. He cited the Soviet pledge to limit Backfire production when making his often-cited statement that SALT II was “a modest, but useful step.”⁹⁷

Few observers of the national security process can deny that the JCS were given a lesser role to play in the policy-making process during the Carter administration. The President and the JCS had significantly different views on arms control. The gap between the thinking of President Carter and the chiefs had been dramatically evident even before the time of the inauguration when the President startled his military advisers by talking about a finite deterrence at a level as low as 200 missiles. As a result of this difference in philosophy, contact between Carter and his military advisers decreased. The JCS as a

⁹⁵ McKittrick, “Arms Control and the JCS,” p. 69.

⁹⁶ Smith interview, 15 January 1998.

⁹⁷ Statement of General David C. Jones, USAF on Behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on SALT II, 11 July 1979, Folder: “Serial Xs [5/79-9/79],” Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Files, Box 36, WHCF, Jimmy Carter Library.

corporate body seldom met the President, although the Chairman was usually present at NSC meetings.⁹⁸

Carter's relations to the JCS were strained from the beginning partly due to his desire to reduce military spending. He was elected on a platform which included defense reform and he believed he could save \$50 billion a year by simply avoiding weapons duplication. This was a problem that he directly blamed on the JCS, since they did not move to limit the parochial nature of the services.⁹⁹ Hence, Carter came to the presidency somewhat weary of the Chiefs and certainly with a different philosophy on defense issues. With the replacement of General Brown in 1978, that changed. But the quality of JCS involvement in the Carter administration did not result in a major impact on the U.S. position for SALT II.

Further, some note that the involvement of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in arms control policy declined steadily over the Carter administration. A defense department historian noted that the JCS was deeply involved in the initial discussions of deep cuts. However, as their positions were increasingly at odds with the prevailing winds, they were gradually moved to the edges of the SALT II formulation debate.¹⁰⁰ There was a slight rebounding with the appointment of General Jones as JCS Chairman, but the overall impact on JCS involvement was negligible. Still, the support of the JCS was a much sought-after commodity, and as a result, they were always present in the process.

⁹⁸ Dougherty, *JCS Reorganization*, p. 21.

⁹⁹ Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 267.

¹⁰⁰ Confidential telephone interview with Department of Defense Official, 10 October 1997.

II. Traits of the JCS Chairmen

General George Brown is best characterized as a "military professional." In spite of his experience in Washington politics, the evidence suggests that Brown was not inclined to play by the rules of politics. He viewed his job as providing the president with military advice and supporting the president's decision in public regardless of his choice. Brown served the Carter administration well, despite being a holdover from the Ford administration and their differences over strategic philosophy.¹⁰¹ He participated in the interagency process on SALT II and saw most of the JCS positions reversed. However, because of his philosophy on military advice, he continued to support the interagency process and the administration publicly, even when "militarily vital" programs such as the B-1 bomber were canceled.

However, the voice of the JCS Chairman increased slightly during the administration. With the appointment of a JCS Chairman by the current administration, as opposed to a holdover from the previous one, this was only natural. The arrival of General David Jones appears to have boosted the military voice in the interagency process. Many noted the increased energy and interest of the JCS Chairman with the arrival of Jones.¹⁰² When General George Brown retired as Chairman of the JCS in 1978, President Carter was interested in selecting a new chairman who would support the administration's line on SALT. As Mark Perry notes, "Carter wanted to make sure his new arms negotiating position with the Soviet Union was endorsed by the JCS."¹⁰³

All indications suggest that General Jones is best classified as a "bureaucratic

¹⁰¹ Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 385.

¹⁰² Warnke interview, 12 February 1998; Holloway interview, 19 February 1998.

manipulator.” Despite the fact that his previous experience would not support this -- most of his staff assignments were limited to the Air Force -- all of those interviewed contended that he showed a keen awareness of political factors in his decision-making as Chairman.¹⁰⁴

This can be seen in his method of operation. Jones’ approach to the interagency process and his support of Carter administration policies upset many of his fellow officers. As one senior JCS official noted, “[Jones] wore his unconventional nature as a badge of honor.”¹⁰⁵ In terms of his approach to the rest of the bureaucracy, Jones understood that the JCS had several structural impediments which inhibited the role it could play in formulation policy. He understood that JCS advice was not timely, and as a result, was more inclined to lead the chiefs to agreement than to wait for a consensus to emerge.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, after he left government service, he would advocate that this arrangement be formalized by passage of the Goldwater-Nichols defense reforms in 1986.

But in spite of the different styles of the chairmen, the results were not significantly different. William Smith believed that General Jones’ attitude towards the whole SALT II process was more enthusiastic than his predecessor, and this explained his improved position. Yet, he also contended, and this study seems to confirm, that his actual policy positions were not all that different from General Brown’s.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Jones’ major policy position – “count or counter” – showed more initiative than the JCS

¹⁰³ Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 270.

¹⁰⁴ See Brown interview, 10 February 1998; Signious interview, 20 February 1998; Slocombe interview, 31 March 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Confidential telephone interview with senior JCS Official, 19 February 1998.

¹⁰⁶ Brown interview, 10 February 1998. See also Smith interview, 15 January 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Webb and Cole, *Chairmen of the JCS*, p. 100.

usually exercised, but the basic position was still an attempt to include the Backfire bomber in the SALT II agreement. Both had a mixed record in getting JCS concerns addressed in the final agreement.

Conclusions:

The JCS were included in the formulation process mostly for their ability to support the treaty in the ratification process, as opposed to being included completely for their perspective. This did not significantly change even with the arrival of a more activist, pro-administration JCS Chairman. The chiefs, as a body, were not a part of Carter's inner circle, though the position of their chairman improved somewhat with the arrival of General Jones.¹⁰⁸ Still, the overall utility of the JCS for the SALT II treaty was their support in the ratification process.

Of course SALT II was not ratified. It faced mounting difficulty in the Senate with the discovery of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba. Later, President Carter withdrew SALT II from Senate consideration in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. He did not get an opportunity to resubmit it. After his defeat in 1980, Carter left the White House and a new era in arms control began under Ronald Reagan. The change had a significant impact on the role of the JCS in the arms control process. They went from Hawks in the midst of Doves, to seemingly Doves in the midst of Hawks.

¹⁰⁸ Smith interview, 15 January 1998.

Chapter 4

Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

Introduction:

In contrast to the civilian political appointees in any given administration, the JCS are often perceived outside of the executive branch as "honest brokers" in arms control. Because this perception is particularly strong in the Senate ratification process, the chiefs are often courted by administration advisors in the formulation process. This was particularly true in the Reagan administration where there was a substantial ideological divide between conservatives in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and moderates in the State Department. JCS support gives legitimacy to a position. In this chapter, we see how the ideological divide between the JCS and OSD fashioned a more moderate coalition between the JCS and the State Department.

We also see the importance of the negative relationship between the JCS and the Secretary of Defense in this section. As had been the case with McNamara in the Johnson administration, poor relations with the Defense Secretary typically hurts the voice of the military far more than it hurts the Secretary. This division was one of the primary factors promoting the coalition between the military and the State Department on INF issues. We also see the impact of public opinion and international change, and the pressure that they can exert on all policy makers – not just the JCS – in arms control. Finally, we see how the JCS voice may change, as the INF negotiations take place over

the tenure of three different JCS Chairmen. All of these factors impacted the role of the JCS in INF formulation process.

In the mid-1970's the Soviet Union began the deployment of SS-20 intermediate range nuclear missiles in the European theater of operations. This missile, which could carry three independently-targeted warheads, had sufficient range to cover all of Western Europe from bases well inside the Soviet Union. Such a deployment would significantly alter the strategic balance in the European Theater if the United States and NATO did not respond. However, counteracting the Soviet deployment would be costly, as well as magnifying the potential destruction of Western Europe in the event of a conflict with the Soviet Union.¹ NATO had to react to this emerging threat.

In response to this new threat, NATO was guided by the "Dual Track" philosophy. Adopted in December 1979, this approach advocated a U.S. deployment of the new Pershing II intermediate-range missile and nuclear-armed ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCM) to Europe beginning in 1983, while simultaneously pursuing negotiations with the Soviets to limit or eliminate such arms in the European theater. In this respect, it was hoped that the U.S. deployment of Pershing IIs and GLCMs would be used as a bargaining chip in the upcoming negotiations.

With this in mind, it seems logical that the military would not become overly attached to the INF missile deployments to Europe. And in the beginning, the military

¹ William Crowe, *The Line of Fire: From Washington to the Gulf, the Politics and Battles of the New Military* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), p. 195. Indeed, the Soviets viewed the deployment of the Pershing II missile to Western Europe as destabilizing because the new weapon would be able to reach command and control targets within the Soviet Union much more quickly than ICBMs launched from the United States. See,

saw the deployment as largely symbolic. However, while they ultimately agreed with bargaining chip position, military support for this approach was not consistent. In particular, once the missiles began to be deployed, many began to resist the possibility of giving up such a potentially valuable system. The reality of the deployments had actually reshaped some of the chiefs' attitudes regarding the purpose of these weapons.² "[The deployments] took on a life of their own," according the Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral William Crowe.³

Carter Administration

The interagency process in the Carter administration for these negotiations was identical to the SALT II apparatus, and therefore does not need to be reiterated here. Issues were ultimately decided in SCC deliberations, or failing agreement here, by the President. The nature of JCS involvement was similar, as well. The initial discussions on INF issues, originally labeled Theater Nuclear Forces (TNF), saw the same extent and character in Joint Chiefs involvement that they enjoyed in the SALT II negotiations. That is, they were often present at the senior-level meetings where decisions were being formulated, but their positions were rarely adopted by the Carter administration as policy.

Arthur M. Cox, *Russian Roulette: The Superpower Game* (New York: Times Books, 1982), p. 23.

² This change in attitudes is similar to the thesis that U.S. political and military policy makers during the Vietnam war became increasingly involved and were unwilling to withdraw from the conflict because of the costs already incurred. See Thomas W. Milburn and Daniel J. Christie, "Effort Justification as a Motive for Continuing War: The Vietnam Case" in *Psychological Dimensions of War*, Betty Glad, ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1990), pp. 236-251.

³ Telephone interview with former JCS Chairman Admiral William Crowe, 26 February 1998.

The formulation of a United States deployment to Europe of intermediate-range nuclear weapons is a case in point. By the Summer of 1979, the decision had been made by NATO to upgrade the deterrent capability in Europe to off-set the continuing Soviet deployment of the SS-20 missile. The question that remained was exactly how large the deployment should be. The Joint Chiefs conducted a study and concluded that the number of nuclear warheads that would be needed to make a credible deterrent threat would number in the thousands. The Soviets had more than a thousand warheads on medium- and short-range missiles in Eastern Europe and deterrence demanded some degree of parity.⁴ Short of that number, the deployment would not be militarily significant. The chiefs were focused on the numbers -- the strategic implications of having a weapon system that could reach Soviet command and control sites well ahead of the ICBMs was not considered. Regardless, the NSC balked at that figure. And while JCS Chairman Jones participated in the July 1979 SCC meeting where the figure of 572 missiles was established, it was obviously at odds with what the military thought was necessary.⁵

As a result, an enduring – and somewhat counter-intuitive – trend developed. The Chiefs were certainly not opposed to the deployment, but they were not overly eager about the INF missile deployments, either. The main value of these new weapons lay in their political symbolism. An example of this political motivation was seen when a

⁴ Richard Halloran, "U.S. Says Soviets Plan to Increase Warheads Aimed at West Europe," *New York Times* 15 October 1979, p. A4.

⁵ Thomas Risse-Kappen, *The Zero Option* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 82-3.

Reagan administration official was told in 1983 that the deployments might have to be delayed due to technical problems with the missiles. He replied

We don't care if the goddamn things work or not. After all, that doesn't matter unless there is a war. What we care about is getting them in (to Western Europe).⁶

Because they understood that these weapons had more political than military significance, the Joint Chiefs were not opposed to using these weapons as bargaining chips once the INF discussions began. Kenneth Adelman notes, "The JCS supported the INF Treaty in large part because the military were never eager for INF deployments in the first place."⁷ The early discussions on the INF deployment saw the JCS involved, but very little evidence that their advice carried much weight. This is consistent with the findings discussed in the SALT II Chapter.

Reagan Administration

The defeat of Jimmy Carter in the election of 1980 placed the JCS in a new political environment. The incoming Reagan administration promised increased emphasis on defense spending and a more consistent worldview for the chiefs. Yet, at the same time, many of the new officials in the Reagan administration were ideologically

⁶ Steven Kull, "The Role of Perceptions in the Nuclear Arms Race" in *Psychological Dimensions of War*, Betty Glad, ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 304.

⁷ Kenneth Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace: Arms Summitry – A Skeptics Account* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 182. He notes that civilians in the Carter administration initiated the TNF effort – partly as a ricochet of the 'neutron bomb' fiasco, partly to help reassure the Allies when SALT II was up for Senate consideration, partly in response to the SS-20s, and for sundry other reasons – with the military merely acquiescing.

more conservative than the military – and many of these individuals were now working in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD).

With the new administration, there was some initial concern over how the theater-level nuclear arms negotiations would proceed. Reagan had campaigned on a platform of taking a much harder line with the Soviets, and there was some question over how the new administration would view the discussions. Indeed, the talks which had finally begun in October, 1980 were put on hold after Carter's defeat since no one was certain of how the new administration viewed the possibility of negotiations on intermediate-range weapons.⁸

Indeed, the administration was not sure of its position either. The Reagan administration was rather slow in establishing its interagency structure for formulating foreign policy positions. While the incoming Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, received permission from the President to resume negotiations before the end of 1981, there was no set interagency structure to formulate a U.S. position. Part of the delay was related to the assassination attempt on President Reagan in March of 1981 and his subsequent convalescence.⁹ Be that as it may, it was almost a year beyond Reagan's inauguration before NSDD2, the directive which established the interagency structure, was issued.

⁸ Keith Shimko, *Images and Arms Control: Perceptions of the Soviet Union in the Reagan Administration* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), p. 150.

⁹ Christopher Simpson, *National Security Decision Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations: The Declassified History of U.S. Political and Military Policy, 1981-1991* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), p. 9.

I. The Actors

There were few, if any, doves in the Reagan administration. The President had been elected on a platform which portrayed a fundamental imbalance in the U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship, and most of his appointees shared that conviction. However, some believed this imbalance to be greater than others. The more ideologically conservative advisors, such as Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and CIA Director William Casey, were so fundamentally driven by a "bad faith" model of the Soviets that they perceived any arms control proposal to be counterproductive to U.S. interests.¹⁰ By contrast, other advisors, such as Secretary of State Alexander Haig, were interested in putting forth arms control proposals that were more realistic. This was not necessarily a desire for greater understanding of the Soviet strategic position – it was a recognition that arms control agreements had to be acceptable to both parties.¹¹ This group believed that U.S. arms control positions which placed severe demands on the Soviets, without a reciprocal sacrifices by the U.S., were not useful. This became a key divide among Reagan's arms control advisers.

Of course, Reagan did not get to appoint all of his initial advisors. Because the Joint Chiefs are not strictly considered political appointees, General David Jones remained as the JCS Chairman until 1982. His policy views regarding arms control had not changed with the new administration – modest arms reductions, which promoted

¹⁰ George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), p. 491.

¹¹ Barry Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analysis, 1988), p. 24.

security and did not constrain new defense programs, were useful. However, the policy context had changed. Many of the civilians in OSD and the NSC viewed General Jones and the JCS with some suspicion. This was the same JCS that had eventually endorsed Carter's SALT II treaty. The ideological divide between the two groups in the Pentagon would result in several policy disagreements which would hinder the JCS role in the formulation of the INF treaty.

In May 1982, Reagan was able to appoint a JCS Chairman of his own choosing. By background and experience, General Jack Vessey is most appropriately classified as a military professional. Certainly, his background did not predispose him to a bureaucratic approach. While, he served in a several staff assignments, the bulk of his service was in line units. As Senator David Durenberger noted in the General's confirmation hearing, "Jack Vessey has served the bulk of his career in combat and command positions. . . He did not achieve high rank by the easy way or playing the game."¹² Further, few of his assignments were in Washington and his experience in joint service environments was limited.¹³ General Vessey was attuned to providing advice based solely on its military content.

In terms of his philosophy on arms control, General Vessey was primarily interested in preserving U.S. military superiority and did not see the larger strategic trade-offs in reducing superpower tensions. He was in favor of arms control agreements which

¹² Senate Armed Services Committee, *Nomination of John W. Vessey, Jr., to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 11 May 1982), p. 3.

¹³ Willard Webb and Ronald Cole, *The Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington: Department of Defense, 1989), pp. 105-108.

promoted security, but he was not willing to cut weaponry simply for the sake of promoting better relations between the United States and the USSR. As he noted

Neither a nuclear freeze nor a nuclear build-up are, in and of themselves, ends to be pursued. The end is security for our country and her allies. Insofar as arms control and force modernization contribute to this end, I support them both. Arms control proposals that are made out of the overall context of national security may well increase the probability of war. The President has made a sensible proposal for the reduction of nuclear arms which. . . can help reduce the risks of nuclear war while improving the security of the United States and her allies.¹⁴

Vessey also believed that arms control should not hamper the development of new weapons programs. He believed that in any arms draw-down, both sides would want to maintain their newest systems. As a result, he believed that weapons modernization should be continued in conjunction with arms negotiations. In his confirmation hearings, he noted that “it is absolutely essential that the President have the opportunity to modernize our own forces” through such programs as the MX missile and the B-1 bomber.¹⁵ He also supported President Reagan's push for research on the strategic defense initiative (SDI). As a result, he was inclined to support arms control agreements which promoted national security, but did not limit technological development.

Under constant public criticism for military mistakes in the Beirut Marine barracks bombing and the Grenada invasion, Vessey decided to retire eight months early - despite the request by Reagan that he reconsider.¹⁶ He was replaced as JCS Chairman by Admiral William Crowe in October 1985. By experience, Crowe represented a

¹⁴ Senate Armed Services Committee, *Nomination of John W. Vessey, Jr., to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 11 May 1982), p. 22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁶ Mark Perry, *Four Stars* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), p. 334.

dramatic departure from his predecessor. He certainly had more experience and exposure to bureaucratic politics and the Washington environment. Admiral Crowe followed a unique career path for a flag officer, serving in many politico-military and staff positions, including Assistant Naval Aid to the President. What is more, he obtained a doctoral degree in Political Science from Princeton University during his naval career. His diplomatic skills were recognized by the Navy, and at one point, he was tasked to work with the Department of the Interior on the Micronesian Status Negotiations in 1971. Hence, by the time he was appointed Chairman, Admiral Crowe had a great deal of political sophistication.¹⁷ This would benefit him greatly in advancing the JCS position in Washington.

Philosophically, however, Crowe had many views similar to his predecessors. He saw imbalances in the U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship and was interested in arms control agreements that promoted U.S. national security. Agreements that gave a relative advantage to the United States he saw as beneficial. As Crowe noted concerning INF:

The agreement that was on the table incorporated two historic advances. First, both sides would actually destroy weapons (rather than simply limit them), and second, the Soviets would destroy a disproportionate number. To break those two thresholds seemed to me terribly important, particularly the idea of the Soviets destroying disproportionately.¹⁸

Crowe also believed that the time was right for agreement. The Soviets were interested in reducing their tactical missile forces, as he saw it, but this desire might pass if there was a change in Soviet leadership. Crowe was interested in promoting U.S. national security

¹⁷ Telephone interview with Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, 24 February 1998.

¹⁸ Crowe, *Line of Fire*, p. 265.

and believed that conditions in the Soviet Union in the late-1980's presented a window of opportunity to achieve that goal.¹⁹

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger took the harshest view of arms control. He believed that previous agreements had been a detriment to U.S. security. Weinberger noted, "We must ensure that the mistakes of the 1970's – the 'decade of neglect' and 'détente' – are never repeated."²⁰ Because of the U.S. defense policies of the 1970's, he believed that the United States was in a significantly inferior strategic position and that an arms build-up was necessary in order to rectify the imbalance.²¹ In his confirmation hearings, Weinberger stated, "I don't think that we should enter into (arms control) negotiations from a position of weakness or a position which contemplates maintenance of the kind of gap that now exists."²² Driving this view of arms control was a belief that the Soviets were an aggressive power that was simply trying to take advantage of the West with arms control. He noted in his memoirs, "the Soviets were not interested in any mutual arms reduction agreements. . . What they wanted was nuclear superiority sufficient to weaken and divide NATO."²³ With this philosophy driving his arms control position, some believed that he was not truly interested in achieving agreements with the Soviets. National Security Adviser Robert 'Bud' McFarlane alluded to this in a 1984

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 262.

²⁰ Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), p. 333.

²¹ Despite his desire to create a massive military build-up, Weinberger showed a reluctance to actually employ military systems in combat situations. He believed that overwhelming superiority, clear mandates, and strong public support were prerequisites to prosecute any military operation. He noted that these were the lessons he took from the Vietnam conflict. See Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 31-32.

²² Senate Armed Services Committee, *Nomination of Caspar W. Weinberger to be Secretary of Defense* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 6 January 1981), p. 12.

memo when he stated, "[T]he record of the first term makes clear that there is determined opposition within the Department of Defense (OSD not JCS) to the very concept of arms control."²⁴

President Reagan's first Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, was also concerned about the strategic balance. A retired General, Haig saw the strategic disparity between the United States and the Soviet Union in much the same way that Weinberger did. He saw the Soviet Union as an expansionist power with aggressive intentions towards the free world.²⁵ However, where they differed was in the feasibility question. Haig was interested in making arms control proposals that had some chance of being accepted by the Soviets. An example of this was his willingness to consider the Soviet security concerns in the draft of the U.S. initial INF position. Haig notes, "It was absurd to expect the Soviets to dismantle an existing force of 1,100 warheads, which they had already put into the field at the cost of billions of rubles, in exchange for a promise from the United States not to deploy a missile force that we had not yet begun to build and that had aroused such violent controversy in Western Europe."²⁶ This emphasis on whether U.S. arms control proposals were negotiable would place Haig in direct opposition to the civilians in the Pentagon. As he noted, "(I) advocated an approach that would require

²³ Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 342.

²⁴ Tom Blanton, ed. *White House E-Mail: The Top Secret Computer Messages the Reagan/Bush White House Tried to Destroy* (New York: New Press, 1995), p. 170.

²⁵ Alexander Haig, Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan and Foreign Policy* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984), p. 220.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

gradual reductions. . . on the grounds that this was negotiable while Defense's position probably was not."²⁷

Haig was replaced as Secretary of State by George Shultz in July 1982. Shultz was also interested in agreements which would advance U.S. national security. As he noted, "We do not seek negotiations for their own sake. . . We negotiate when it is in our interests to do so."²⁸ But he believed that U.S. proposals should take in to account Soviet security concerns because successful negotiations between the superpowers would help improve relations. On this point, Shultz felt that it was his job to convince the President. In 1984, he noted, "I needed to sharpen my argument so that the president would clearly see that an arms reduction agreement and a better U.S.-Soviet relationship were necessary objectives." This was because within the administration (particularly the NSC and OSD), Shultz believed there was significant opposition to the very idea of arms control and improved relations with the Soviets.²⁹

II. The Structure

In the Reagan interagency process, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were fully integrated in to the formal process. The Chairman or his representative was present at all levels. While there were some informal interagency groupings which excluded the JCS, these were typically discussion forums and the JCS absence did not damage their role in the process. Further, their participation in the process was unaffected by the bureaucratic restructuring which took place in 1984.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 222-223.

²⁸ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 487.

The Reagan interagency process saw a great proliferation of interagency groups generally. At the top of the pyramid was the National Security Council. This was the final decision point for most issues and the various departments were represented by their principals. As is legally mandated, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were represented by their Chairman – General David Jones, a Carter administration appointee, was the first person to fill that role in the Reagan administration.

Below the National Security Council level, NSDD 2 created a series of Senior Interdepartmental Groups (SIGs). SIGs were undersecretary-level bodies which were charged with sorting out problems which could not be resolved at a lower level. There were three primary SIGs covering the areas of intelligence, foreign policy, and defense policy, and these were chaired by the relevant cabinet secretary. In contrast to the previous administration, Reagan hoped to move towards a “cabinet-government” system and encouraged this by de-emphasizing the role of the NSC in the interagency process. As a result, arms control groups were typically chaired by a representative of the State Department. In this SIG, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were represented by the Director of the Joint Staff – initially, this was General James Dalton.

Just below this level were the interagency groups (IGs). These were organized along regional and functional lines to conduct more detailed policy planning, and were generally chaired by individuals at the assistant secretary level. Like the SIGs, the IGs were interdepartmental in their composition and included National Security Council staff members, though not necessarily as chairman. The Chairman of the INF IG was the State

²⁹ Ibid., p. 491.

Department representative Richard Burt.³⁰ Indeed, the State Department representative was often the chairman of arms control related interagency groups. This included IGs on such areas as START, chemical weapons, conventional arms control, and space-based weapons. On the INF group, the JCS was represented by Rear Admiral Robert Austin, Deputy Director for International Negotiations for the Joint Staff.

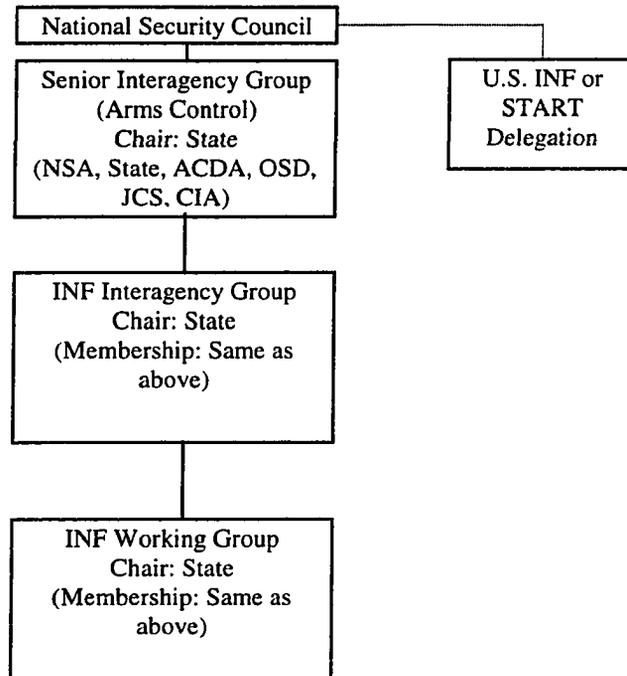
The function of the interagency groups was to study items of concern for the more senior interagency bodies in the hope that the more junior groupings could flesh out the details and come to an agreement. A formal decision directive procedure was added to the SIG/IG process to facilitate the White House's ability to direct the policy making process and to maintain greater managerial control. Under this system, a member of the SIG or the National Security Council could call for a study. If President Reagan concurred, a National Security Study Directive (NSDD) would be issued. According to National Security Advisor Robert 'Bud' McFarlane:

The relevant SIG/IG or other group conducts policy analysis in response to the NSDD. The interagency nature of these groups and the participation of the NSC staff at each level helps ensure that a consensus is reached at as low a level as possible and that unresolved issues are forwarded for decision at a higher level. The NSC staff prepares the overview paper which covers the study before it goes to the president for a decision. The actual decision is usually made at an NSC meeting where the president receives the views of his cabinet officers personally. Once the president decides the matter, he issues his judgment in the form of a National Security Decision Directive (NSDD). The NSDD then becomes the explicit statement of administration policy and is used as the basis for implementation and further policy development.³¹

³⁰ Given the prominence of the OSD representative, Richard Perle, in the interagency process, Burt eventually shared the chairmanship of this group.

³¹ Robert McFarlane with Saunders and Schull, "The National Security Council: Organization for Policy Making" in *The Presidency and National Security Policy*, R.

Chart 4. US Interagency Process for INF and START in the Reagan Administration



Once the framework for the various positions were determined at the IG level, a study of the many issues and development of policy options was the task of the working groups. These entities, again chaired by a State Department representative, were a subgroup of the IG and included representatives of each of the interested agencies at a level one or two steps below the IG principal (Assistant Secretary Level). The division of labor in this analysis was predictable – OSD and JCS would analyze the impact of each proposal on U.S. forces. The intelligence community would look at the implications for the Soviet Union and judge how well the United States could assess verification of any given agreement. ACDA added technical advice and pertinent historical information. In

Gordon Hoxie, ed. (New York: Center for the Study of the Presidency, Proceedings: vol. 5, no. 1, 1984), p. 208.

addition to managing the process and trying to enforce deadlines, the State Department was a vigorous advocate for its own approach to the issues.³²

The last formal element of the process was the on-site delegation. The negotiating team for the INF agreement was led by Paul Nitze. He had held high posts in the State and Defense Departments in every administration from Franklin Roosevelt to Richard Nixon. Prior to this assignment, his last public service position had been as a member of the SALT I negotiating team. However, he had had considerable impact on the debate over nuclear arms control during the SALT II process as a leading figure in the Committee on Present Danger, which opposed the Carter administration's agreement.

Nitze believed that the Soviet Union held a strategic advantage and that arms control could be used to rectify this imbalance. As a result, arms control was an effort to enhance U.S. security, not promote détente. It was to be a limited and pragmatic effort to achieve military goals through non-military means.³³ But he did, in fact, want an agreement. Unlike the defense conservatives in OSD, Nitze believed a limited agreement was better than no agreement at all.³⁴

With the deployment of the Pershing II missiles to Europe in 1983, the Soviet Union walked out of the INF negotiations. When they returned in 1985, the INF on-site delegation was subsumed under the Nuclear and Space Talks (NST) framework. This

³²This particular approach was seen by many of the participants as a rush for an agreement, regardless of the merits. See, Crowe, *Line of Fire*, p. 215. Also, Telephone interview with Senior Negotiator, 20 February 1998.

³³Dan Callahan, *Dangerous Capabilities: Paul Nitze and the Cold War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), p. 266.

³⁴Betty Glad, Jane Berthusen-Gottlick and Roger Moore, "Beyond GRIT: Gorbachev's Approach to Arms Limitation, 1985-1988," Paper presented at the International Studies Association Meeting, Buenos Aires, July 1991, p. 8.

arrangement essentially combined three separate negotiations -- INF, START, and Space-based Weapons -- under one framework. This new format did not significantly alter the operation of the on-site delegation. Each of these three negotiating groups continued to have representatives from five government agencies on their delegations: State Department, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the intelligence agencies.³⁵ Indeed, one of the primary reasons for this new framework was simply so that the Soviets could "save face" by claiming that they were not returning to the same talks that they had walked out of in 1983.

Despite this formal interagency structure, there were also several informal senior-level interagency groups which were occasionally formed in support of arms control matters. In the case of INF issues, these became more prevalent as the administration became bogged down in internal struggle during the fall of 1982. In addition, President Reagan's hands-off management style and the personalities of the players led to greatly increased bureaucratic rivalries to the point of "institutionalized bureaucratic warfare."³⁶ The result was stalemate. Richard Burt noted that the INF Interagency Group which he chaired became "an exercise in frustration."³⁷

The formal structure had to adapt by creating informal mechanisms which could reach a decision.³⁸ For instance, George Shultz charged his Deputy Secretary, Kenneth Dam, to form a new interagency group to oversee arms control issues. As Shultz noted, "I want Ken Dam to take the Bull by the horns [and] I think Ken can do that with a

³⁵ Kenneth Thompson, ed., *Foreign Policy in the Reagan Administration: Nine Intimate Perspectives* (New York: University Press of America, 1993), p. 87.

³⁶ Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control*, p. 20.

³⁷ Telephone interview with Ambassador Richard Burt, 20 February 1998.

maximum of effectiveness and a minimum of friction.”³⁹ To this end, the Dam Group was formed in early 1983 in order to keep the arms control interagency process moving. In particular, Dam saw the committee as a discussion group, whose intent was to “keep people talking to one another” at the Deputy and Assistant Secretary level in the wake of the Walk-in-the-Woods rejection and the sacking of ACDA Director Eugene Rostow. Rostow had been dismissed for publicly airing his disappointment that the administration did not follow-up on the Walk-in-the-Woods proposal.⁴⁰ Dam was attempting to forge common ground between the two factions in the government and he gave particular attention to including Richard Perle and the OSD because he saw them as the main obstacle to progress on arms control.⁴¹

The Chiefs were not represented in this group because Dam felt that they were not initiators in the process and their decision structure was not timely enough. As he noted, “the Chiefs have to have an inter-service meeting before they can say anything.”⁴² The Dam group was not the only informal interagency group that was formed, but it was symptomatic of the difficulties which were being encountered in the formal interagency process. Be that as it may, none of these informal interagency structures were acting in lieu of the formal process as had been the case in the Nixon administration.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Strobe Talbott, *Deadly Gambits: The Reagan Administration and the Stalemate in Nuclear Arms Control* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 154.

⁴⁰ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 161. See also, Callahan, *Dangerous Capabilities*, p. 431.

⁴¹ Telephone interview with former Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam, 30 March 1998. See also, Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, p. 150.

⁴² Dam interview, 30 March 1998.

The inefficiency of the formal process led to its overhaul in 1984. In response to the gridlock and bureaucratic proliferation that had accompanied the arms control process, the Reagan administration reorganized its interagency process. The senior interagency group was essentially eliminated, with the Senior Arms Control Policy Group (SACPG) replacing it.⁴³ The SACPG membership was largely the same as the group that it replaced. Yet, it appeared to play a larger part in the interagency process than its predecessor. The most significant change in this structure was the centralization of control in the White House – these groups were now chaired by a representative from the NSC. National Security Advisor McFarlane noted

the traditionally incremental approach to making changes to the US position within State makes it desirable to elevate the management of the bureaucracy to the White House. Right now, the interdepartmental groups (IGs and SIGs) are managed by the Departments. Unless and until these groups are chaired within the White House we will continue to face paralysis we have often faced these past four years.⁴⁴

In many ways, the Reagan structure became very similar to the SCC structure under Carter and the Verification Panel structure under Ford and Nixon.

III. Impact of the Joint Chiefs in the Formulation Process

a. 1981-1982, Formulation During General Jones' Tenure

The role of the JCS in the formulation of INF positions was significantly hampered by its relations with its civilian superiors at OSD. Indeed, OSD not only served to negate the military voice in the process, but also moved to prevent the JCS from allying with other actors in the interagency process, as well. Largely based on ideological

⁴³ This group was later renamed the Senior Arms Control Group (SACG).

⁴⁴ Blanton, *White House E-Mail*, pp. 170-171.

differences, this situation remained in place up until early 1987 when the primary opponents in OSD left government service. Once these changes occurred, the JCS played a much stronger role in the interagency framework. However, these changes occurred too late in the INF negotiations to significantly affect JCS participation in the formulation process.

The initial proposal for the INF negotiations highlighted the conflict which would epitomize the Reagan administration interagency structure on arms control. Two different schools of thought emerged soon after the administration took office, and each had a specific policy preference on INF. On the one hand, there were the moderates. Centered primarily at the State Department, they included such individuals as Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Assistant Secretary of State for Political and Military Affairs Richard Burt. These individuals were the primary Reagan administration advocates of the "Dual Track" philosophy. In time, the JCS would ally themselves with this group. In contrast to the moderates, a conservative group formed in the civilian positions at the Department of Defense and the National Security Council. Led by Defense Secretary Weinberger and Assistant Defense Secretary for International Security Richard Perle, this group took a much more pessimistic view of arms control.

The position of the Joint Chiefs was somewhat fragile in this atmosphere. Many of the defense conservatives who now held positions of power within the Pentagon looked upon the military advisors in a very unfavorable light. The new administration in 1981 had not changed the JCS leadership. As a result, the JCS was staffed with the same service chiefs that backed the failed SALT II treaty – a treaty that many of the defense conservatives had severely criticized. As Perry notes, "the JCS had been castigated by

the administration insiders for its support of strategic arms limitations during the Carter years because they provided no real cuts in the Superpower's nuclear arsenals."⁴⁵ This led to friction between the military and civilian leadership within the Pentagon almost from the start.

The defense conservatives presented their initial proposal for the INF agreement in the Summer of 1981. Known simply as the "zero option," the main thrust was that the United States would forego the deployment of its Pershing IIs and ground-launched cruise missiles in exchange for the elimination of Soviet INF forces in Europe. On the face of it, this seemed like a reasonable proposal. However, this proposal was asking the Soviets to give up five complete weapons systems in which they had a substantial investment in return for 572 as yet undeployed U.S. missiles.⁴⁶ This proposal was symptomatic of the proposals being forwarded by the defense conservatives. As Admiral Eugene Carroll once remarked, "[Weinberger and Perle's] philosophy of arms control is real simple – they sit down across from the Soviets and say, 'we win, you lose, sign here.'"⁴⁷ Their proposals lacked feasibility on such a consistent basis that many began to question whether the civilians in the defense department truly wanted any arms control agreements.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 296.

⁴⁶ Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 151. See also, George Rueckert, *Global Double Zero: The INF Treaty from Its Origins to Implementation* (London: Greenwood Press, 1993), p. 42.

⁴⁷ Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 293-5.

⁴⁸ See, Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 110. National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane noted this trend in e-mail communications to the President. See also, Blanton, *White House E-Mail*, p. 150.

By contrast, the moderates within the administration countered with a different proposal. This proposal was a variation of the zero option that they viewed as more negotiable, more palatable to European allies, and more in line with the December 1979 decision to pursue the Dual Track approach.⁴⁹ Their so-called “zero plus” option closely resembled the position that the Carter administration adopted in the preliminary round of talks. While keeping the eventual goal of complete elimination of long-range INF (LRINF) weapons, the zero plus position called for reductions in the current Soviet deployments and future U.S. deployments to equal levels, with the precise figures left to the negotiations.⁵⁰

JCS merely looked on during this debate throughout most of 1981, but the Chiefs eventually weighed-in on the side of the moderates. The Joint Chiefs saw the zero option of the conservatives as unrealistic, and believed that trading the Pershing II and cruise missile deployment for a significant reduction of Soviet INF forces in Europe to be a credible and useful agreement. However, their support for the moderates would not last long. Aware of the fact that a divided voice from the Defense Department might hamper their own arms control position, the civilian leadership in the Defense Department moved to encourage the JCS to adopt their position.

According to Strobe Talbott, that encouragement took the form of “blackmail.” The Chiefs were informed that if they did not support their civilian superiors in the department there would be repercussions. For instance, one complication in the INF

⁴⁹ While this group opposed the Zero Option proposed by the OSD, they did recognize that it was a clever, if cynical, negotiating ploy. See, Rueckert, *Global Double Zero*, p. 42.

⁵⁰ Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 152.

talks, which was less of a problem in the strategic arms talks, was the issue of the dual-capable quality of aircraft.⁵¹ The Joint Chiefs had historically resisted any proposal that included tactical aircraft in Soviet-American arms talks. For instance, the JCS was adamant against the inclusion of Forward Based Systems in the SALT I negotiations. Perle used this to his advantage. As Talbott notes, “Perle was prepared to indulge his uniformed colleagues at the Pentagon in their reflexive and obsessive opposition to any limits on aircraft, but only for something in exchange.”⁵² That something was support of the zero option. Faced with this choice, the Chiefs agreed to back the zero option in exchange for aircraft being discussed only in some vague second phase of the negotiations, if at all.⁵³

However, the Chiefs were still hesitant. In a November meeting of the INF interagency group, the JCS Representative, Admiral Robert Austin still expressed support for the zero-plus position of the administration moderates. At that point Assistant Secretary Perle suggested that the group should perhaps “revisit” the issue of whether aircraft should be included in the initial proposal. In addition, following the meeting, Perle reemphasized to Admiral Austin his position and concluded with the statement that “backsliding” by the Chiefs was unacceptable.⁵⁴ Soon thereafter, the Joint Chiefs officially backed the zero option as the opening US arms control position in December 1981. The President accepted this proposal and the zero option remained the U.S. position until President Reagan in March 1983 announced his willingness to accept an

⁵¹ Lloyd Jensen, *Bargaining for National Security* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 192.

⁵² Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, p. 67.

⁵³ Jensen, *Bargaining for National Security*, p. 197.

interim agreement establishing equal global levels of intermediate-range nuclear forces at the lowest mutually acceptable number.⁵⁵

Many have discussed this prominent reversal in JCS policy.⁵⁶ An alternative to the “blackmail” theory is that the JCS reversed their policy in order to improve relations with their civilian superiors. For instance, former Director of the Joint Staff, General James Dalton, contended that there was no exchange -- the chiefs altered their position in order to improve their relations with OSD.⁵⁷ Another potential explanation centers on the fact that the JCS saw the INF negotiations as secondary to the strategic arms negotiations, and were willing to be more flexible in INF as a result. What appears most likely is that it was a combination of these factors. Unfortunately, the JCS reversal only reinforced a growing tendency by the civilian leaders in the Defense Department to strong-arm the JCS. As Assistant Secretary Perle later noted, the JCS are “pushovers and patsies for whoever leans on them the last, the longest, and the hardest.”⁵⁸ Thus, the initial involvement of the JCS in the Reagan administration INF debate was not marked by a considerable amount of power.

In January 1982, OSD and JCS positions again diverged, this time over the status of conventionally-armed cruise missiles in the U.S. negotiating position. At issue was whether or not the military would ever have a need for a conventionally-armed variant of the ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM). The military view of conventionally

⁵⁴ Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, p. 68.

⁵⁵ Jensen, *Bargaining for National Security*, p. 194.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the issue, see, Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*; Perry, *Four Stars*; Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*.

⁵⁷ Telephone interview with former Director of the Joint Staff General James Dalton, 19 February 1998.

armed cruise missiles was that they were not cost effective and that they impeded verification procedures, as a conventionally-armed cruise missile is nearly impossible to distinguish from a nuclear-armed variant.⁵⁹ The JCS view on this position was again communicated in the interagency process by RADM Austin (the JCS representative to the INF Interagency Group). However, it was again discounted by the civilian leadership from the Defense Department. As a result, Assistant Secretary Perle argued for the exemption of a weapon that the military believed it would never need. With RADM Austin present but not countering the arguments, many began to believe that the JCS would not oppose the OSD leadership, despite their treatment of the JCS.⁶⁰

This issue brought stalemate to the INF IG, with the moderates led by Burt firmly opposing the position put forth by Perle. As a result, the issue was forwarded up to the Senior Interagency Group for a decision. Unfortunately, this group was also unable to resolve the issue. The next level was the National Security Council or the President himself. The NSA, William Clark, condensed the arguments of the lower group into a memo for the President to decide on. However, the memo was formulated by the NSC staff, where Perle had many allies. As a result, Perle was able to influence the wording of the document and the President decided in favor of his position.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 296.

⁵⁹ Also, because a conventional payload is significantly heavier than a nuclear payload, the range of a cruise missile is affected by the type of weapon. Telephone interview with former Assistant to the Chairman Lieutenant General Howard Graves, 23 February 1998.

⁶⁰ Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control*, p. 25.

⁶¹ Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, p. 102-103.

B. 1982-1985, Formulation During General Vessey's Tenure

The arrival of General Vessey to succeed the retiring David Jones did not improve the JCS position in INF to any degree. An example of this is seen in another critical event for the INF negotiations during Reagan's first term known as the "Walk in the Woods" Proposal. In 1982, U.S. negotiator Paul Nitze and his Soviet counterpart, Yuli Kvitskinskiy, began a series of informal dialogues which moved beyond the zero option proposed by Washington. This framework allowed for one potential solution to the U.S.-Soviet impasse on intermediate-range weapons. First, it proposed that the Americans and the Soviets be allowed an equal number of INF missile launchers in Europe. The proposal also precluded the deployment of Pershing II missiles to Europe. Finally, it stipulated that the Soviets freeze any further SS-20 deployments to the Asian part of the USSR.

However, once again, the poor relations with OSD came to impair the ability of the JCS in the formulation process. In response to a direct question from the President, JCS advice was "hijacked" by their civilian superiors. That is, OSD managed to reinterpret the JCS recommendation for the President in such a way as to suit their own position.

The Chiefs were not officially informed of the Walk-in-the-Woods proposal until an NSC meeting in early August 1982. The meeting was intended to evaluate the proposal and a "mini group" was formed at the meeting to study the question. The JCS was represented on this group by Major General William Burns, the JCS representative to the INF delegation. The mini-group endorsed the Nitze proposal and JCS Chairman Vessey, who had recently replaced General Jones, endorsed the position of the group.

But the President came back with a question specifically for the JCS. Was it militarily prudent to give up the Pershing II deployment for only a Soviet reduction in SS-20s? Could the United States counter the “fast fliers” (ballistic missiles) with “slow fliers” (cruise missiles)?

The questions that the President asked the chiefs to address were the subject of intense debates within the group. However, the final position of the JCS was that a substantial reduction of the SS-20 force was worth foregoing the deployment of the Pershing II system. While this final report of the JCS was carefully worded and stopped short of a clear recommendation, it might have provided the basis for a presidential decision to proceed with a Walk-in-the-Woods formula.

However, the effort was wasted – the JCS reply to the President's question never reached the White House. Though the nation's military leaders were willing to consider abandoning the Pershing II, some in the country's highest political circles were not.⁶² Once again, OSD managed to inhibit JCS participation. Richard Perle subsumed some of the Chiefs' points into a paper that clearly opposed the Nitze initiative and inaccurately claimed JCS concurrence.⁶³ At the next NSC meeting, with General Vessey remaining “on the sidelines,” Nitze's proposal to negotiate away the Pershing II's was rejected.⁶⁴ “Tell the Soviets that you're working for one tough son-of-a-bitch,” said Reagan to Nitze.⁶⁵ The United States stuck to its initial zero option.

⁶² G. Henken, *Counsels of War* (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. 327.

⁶³ Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control*, pp. 26-27.

⁶⁴ Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 157.

⁶⁵ Strobe Talbott, *Master of the Game: Paul Nitze and the Nuclear Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1988), p. 177.

Unfortunately for Nitze and his proposal, “the walk in the woods” formula was worked out at a time when the unilateralist arms control opponents like Richard Perle dominated in Washington. This domination also impaired the ability of the JCS to participate in the formulation process. Another reason for the dominance of this unilateralist faction was the political vacuum at the State Department in the summer of 1982. Secretary Haig, one of the prominent advocates of the “zero plus” position, had left the administration in June and his replacement, George Shultz, had not yet firmly established himself.⁶⁶

But Reagan was not as “tough” as he thought. Public opinion and political pressure from allies would cause him to make some conciliatory public statements regarding INF. Public demonstrations, both in Europe and the United States, were clamoring for progress in arms control and their numbers were growing. At the same time, the West Germans were pushing for a change in the U.S. position. They had come to learn of the Walk-in-the-Woods proposal after its rejection and they were not pleased that it had been turned down without the U.S. consulting them. In public statements, Reagan began to show more flexibility on his arms control positions. For instance, in a February 1983 speech, the President declared that “we’re negotiating in good faith in Geneva, and ours is not a take it or leave it proposal.” While administration spokesmen denied that Reagan’s move was determined by political pressures and protests, it is difficult to identify a more persuasive explanation.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 155.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

By this time, progress on the negotiations was practically non-existent. As Shimko notes, “the Geneva negotiations had degenerated into an exchange of hollow rhetoric and endless charges of bad faith. As 1982 turned to 1983, the deadline for the deployment was fast approaching.”⁶⁸ The Soviets had declared that the deployment of the new U.S. weapons would cause them to withdraw from the negotiations. They made good on that promise in November 1983, when the first Pershing II missiles were deployed.

When the Soviets returned to the negotiating table in January 1985, the context of the negotiations was drastically different than before. The new round of talks took place in a context that differed significantly from the first round in several respects. First, Reagan's landslide reelection in November 1984 destroyed any hopes that the Soviets might have entertained for a more accommodating administration. Second, although there was leadership continuity in Washington, an important change occurred in Moscow with Gorbachev's rise to power. Third, an entirely new issue had been introduced beginning with Reagan's announcement of his strategic defense initiative (SDI) in March 1983, a program Reagan showed no sign of backing away from. These last two developments had a profound effect on the future of arms control negotiations and internal policy debates in Washington.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

c. 1985-1987, Formulation During Admiral Crowe's Tenure

Admiral William Crowe represented the JCS in Washington by the time the Soviets returned to the INF negotiations in 1985. However, Admiral Crowe did not have a lot of impact on the INF negotiations because the formulation process within the U.S. government had settled down somewhat. The U.S. position on INF was largely set. Movement in the negotiations was largely driven by concessions from Mikhail Gorbachev.⁷⁰ From 1985 to 1987, the U.S. position fluctuated between various formulations of the "zero plus" position put forward in August and September of 1983. Debates within the administration about the specifics of the U.S. INF proposal had ceased.

Shimko believes that it might be slightly misleading to say the debate ceased; a better description might be "shifted." Disagreements over INF were masked by, or transposed onto, conflicts on other issues. For instance, one of the main Soviet positions was to link any arms agreement on intermediate or strategic arms to the Strategic Defense Initiative. The deployment of Pershing II missiles to Western Europe was seen by the Soviets as destabilizing to the strategic balance -- they believed that these missiles could reach Moscow in as little as seven minutes, instead of the thirty minutes that ICBMs from the continental United States would take.⁷¹ The development of SDI alarmed the Soviets still further, because combined with the Pershing II deployments, it appeared that the United States was attempting to achieve a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union. Some Soviets believed that these new developments meant that the United States was

⁷⁰ Glad, et. al., "Beyond GRIT," pp. 3-4.

⁷¹ Adelman, *Great Universal Embrace*, pp. 244-245.

preparing for war.⁷² As a result of these Soviet concerns, many in the administration advocated restrictions on SDI as part of a grand compromise. However, above and beyond their assessment of this linkage issue, by opposing any give on the issue of strategic defenses, Perle and Weinberger were de facto opposing an INF treaty.⁷³

International events and domestic public opinion were also driving the administration towards an agreement. Many felt that the increasing willingness of the Soviets to come to agreement on arms control issues was an opportunity that could not be passed up. As Air Force Chief of Staff Larry Welch noted, “The Chairman [and I] both felt that this was a historic time. In both world conditions and the personalities of the two heads of state, we had a historic opportunity to come to an agreement.”⁷⁴ Indeed, it is ironic that the basic tenets of the INF accord were proposed by Richard Perle – a man who did not believe that the Soviets would ever accept his proposal. As General John Dalton, the Director of the Joint Staff, noted, “Richard Perle had come up with the zero option to prove Soviet insincerity.” In the end, he was surprised as anyone else that they would accept it.⁷⁵

One of the last prominent negotiation issues was verification. The JCS had maintained the most conservative position on verification for some time – indeed, they believed that Soviet refusal to accept verification proposals were the main barrier to agreement. However, when the Soviets finally accepted the verification measures, the JCS began to have reservations, as this meant that the Soviets would have extensive

⁷² Cable News Network, *Cold War: Star Wars, 1980-1988* (Episode 22) 21 March 1999.

⁷³ Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 162.

⁷⁴ Telephone interview with former Air Force Chief of Staff General Larry Welch, 3 March 1998.

access to U.S. military facilities.⁷⁶ To that end, the JCS advocated a less intrusive system. In 1987, the administration decision to lessen the intrusiveness of proposed verification measures was taken in part due to these JCS objections concerning the earlier, more comprehensive U.S. verification proposals. This new position, largely the work of the Pentagon, became the basis for the verification procedures which were established for INF.⁷⁷

Another episode where the JCS were able to affect the U.S. position was the issue of short-range INF (SRINF) weapons. The current negotiations called for an elimination of long-range INF weapons, but it did not foreclose the possibility of converting the LRINF weapons to a shorter-range variant.⁷⁸ The U.S. position on converting both Pershing II ballistic missiles to shorter range missiles and GLCMs to another basing mode was taken after much discussion with the JCS. The Chiefs were reluctant to foreclose the missile conversion option but conceded when it was agreed in the negotiations to ban all SRINF weapons, as well. The JCS had concerns regarding this proposal (this is the second zero of the double zero formula) but endorsed it after studying the issue over a considerable period of time.⁷⁹ With this endorsement, the administration issued NSDD 278 in June 1987 – the directive which established the global double zero framework which would become the heart of the INF treaty.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Dalton interview, 19 February 1998.

⁷⁶ Crowe interview, 26 February 1998.

⁷⁷ Risse-Kappen, *The Zero Option*, p. 143.

⁷⁸ Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control*, p. 27.

⁷⁹ "The Wary Warlords", *Newsweek* 11 May 1987, p. 5.

⁸⁰ Simpson, *National Security Decision Directives*, p. 743.

Analysis

I. JCS Involvement

The role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the INF formulation process was directly affected by their relationship with the Secretary of Defense and his staff. Formally, the Secretary of Defense is the immediate superior of the JCS. Yet, the Pentagon has always spoken with two voices, not one. And certainly these two voices do not always agree on a particular policy prescription. This weakens the role of military advisors (both civilian and uniformed) in the process. Certainly we have seen that the OSD staff under Defense Secretary Weinberger moved in an aggressive and adversarial fashion to quell any dissenting voice from the JCS on INF.

This also affected the ability of the JCS to align itself with other members of the interagency process who were sympathetic to their positions. In most cases, the JCS and the State Department held very similar ideological views on INF. Yet, as was noted several times in this chapter, OSD moved to prevent the JCS from joining such an alliance. After all, this cooperation was antithetical to their arms control positions. Another instance of this is seen in the fact that, under the tenure of Caspar Weinberger, the JCS was not allowed to formally meet with the Secretary of State without the Defense Secretary present. This changed soon after Weinberger left the Pentagon.⁸¹

At the same time, the continuing public pressure within the United States for some sort of agreement placed an additional political strain on the administration. Jensen notes this when he states "Both internal and external public opinion also became a greater force to contend with than in previous decades. Considerable pressure was exerted by the

nuclear freeze movement in the United States as well as European publics concerned about the emplacement of intermediate-range nuclear weapons on European soil. It was partially because of such activities that a reluctant American administration . . . agreed to negotiate.”⁸² Shimko also finds that public pressure helped move the Reagan administration off of the zero option in 1983.⁸³ Finally, Simpson highlights a similar political problem near the end of the agreement. He finds “the administration was under considerable pressure domestically to demonstrate leadership in arms control prior to the 1988 elections.”⁸⁴ While the domestic political pressure and the international opportunity did not solely impact the JCS and their advice, they understood the pressures and time constraints, and their advice was impacted accordingly.

II. Traits of the JCS Chairmen

The INF process witnessed three different JCS chairmen attempting to influence the process. General David Jones, a bureaucratic manipulator, was not very influential in the interagency process because of his previous service in the Carter administration. The treatment of the JCS in the initial INF proposal is symptomatic of this. However, being a holdover is not necessarily a fatal condition. Jones learned some valuable lessons from INF regarding the Reagan administration that he applied to upcoming talks on strategic arms.

⁸¹ Carlucci interview, 24 February 1998.

⁸² Jensen, *Bargaining for National Security*, p. 243. See also, Ruckert, *Global Double Zero*, p. 36.

⁸³ Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 180.

⁸⁴ Simpson, *National Security Decision Directives*, p. 747.

Vessey's performance during the INF formulation process leads to the conclusion that he is best categorized as a military professional. His advice was limited to the military issues pertaining to the INF discussions. Also, during the Walk-in-the-Woods debate, Vessey showed an unwillingness to enter the political fray. Vessey had endorsed the Nitze initiative when it first arose, but remained passive in the crucial NSC meeting when the proposal was rejected. Active JCS endorsement might have persuaded Reagan to seriously consider the proposal. However, Vessey and the JCS were trying to repair relations with their civilian superiors in OSD, and did not actively oppose Defense Secretary Weinberger's attacks on the Nitze initiative. Indeed, it was General Vessey's "non-political" image which some had hoped would help him repair the damaged relations between the JCS and OSD."⁸⁵

However, one event does not establish a pattern. Vessey's performance in the Walk-in-the-Woods discussions is instructive, but it does not provide definitive proof that General Vessey is best classified as a military professional. His tenure occurred at a low point in the arms control negotiations. He arrived in June 1982 – five months before the Soviets walked out of the Geneva talks. He retired in September 1985 – six months after the talks had resumed. Hence, Vessey also lacked the opportunity to participate in the arms control process to the extent that his predecessor or successor did.⁸⁶

Yet, while he lacked the opportunity to participate, the perceptions of those who served with him in government was that he was a "non-political" official. For instance,

⁸⁵ Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 305. There were similar hopes in the appointment of Lieutenant General Jack Merrit as Director of the Joint Staff in 1983. He consistently advised the Joint Staff to agree with OSD whenever possible. See, Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control*, p. 23.

one official, in comparing General Vessey and Admiral Crowe, noted how General Vessey was “plain spoken and direct” while Admiral Crowe had “a great deal of political sophistication.”⁸⁷ Others argued that it was a lack of background which caused General Vessey to be a less active player in the arms control process.⁸⁸ Indeed, some believed that Vessey did not attempt to actively foster allies within the interagency process and the Washington scene, generally. As his successor, Admiral William Crowe noted, “John Vessey. . . had no separate military constituency; he may not have believed it appropriate.”⁸⁹

Admiral Crowe certainly cultivated non-military constituencies. However, given the state of the negotiations by the time he became chairman, there was little opportunity to consider his skills. Admiral Crowe is best characterized as a bureaucratic manipulator, but the best examples of this came in the START negotiations.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how poor relations between the JCS and their civilian superiors can often harm the military’s voice in the arms control formulation process. However, the INF accord was not the only arms control treaty which was being negotiated during the Reagan administration. Formulation of a position for the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) began to be considered after the initial INF proposal had been constructed. The JCS had learned some hard lessons on “bureaucratic warfare” in

⁸⁶ Carlucci interview, 24 February 1998.

⁸⁷ Interview with Senior National Security Council official, 26 February 1998.

⁸⁸ Interview with former ACDA Director Ambassador Kenneth Adelman, 15 January 1998. Also, Dalton interview, 19 February 1998.

that time period. Also, while the JCS may have not felt that the INF deployment was of much significance to U.S. security, there was no such illusion regarding a strategic arms treaty. As a result, the JCS came to the START formulation process in a much better position.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Crowe, *Line of Fire*, p. 218.

⁹⁰ Dalton interview, 19 February 1998.

Chapter 5

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty I

Introduction:

Chairman Jones and the JCS faced much the same relationship with OSD that they had had in the INF formulation process. As holdovers from the previous administration, not to mention supporters of an arms control treaty that many in the Reagan administration opposed, it would seem likely that the military voice in the START process would have been diminished. Yet that was not the case. Whether it be that the chiefs had learned some lessons from INF, that they had more interest in START, or some combination of the two, the JCS played a very significant role in the START formulation process. Another part of this explanation may be the political skills of the Chairman, as General Jones (and later Admiral Crowe and General Powell) appeared to enjoy more policy success than the first chairman appointed by Reagan, General Vessey.

At the same time, there were other important dynamics which affected the arms control process generally and the JCS in particular. In a general sense, the involvement of the Congress and the public in the arms control formulation process was significant in Reagan's first term. In many ways, they set the broad parameters over what was an acceptable START policy, and applied constant pressure to make progress in the negotiations. The rise of Gorbachev during Reagan's second term and his impact on the international environment also produced a more conducive environment for arms control.

As to factors specific to the JCS, advocates of military reform were finally successful in 1986 with the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act. For years, many had complained that the JCS structure was too time-consuming and inefficient to provide effective military advice to the President. In particular, the primary points of contention were that the Chairman was not the formal head of the JCS, nor the head of the Joint Staff. When these changes were instituted, it was thought that there might be a profound impact on the quality of JCS advice. However, in the end, neither the problem or the solution were as fundamental as many had thought.

Reagan Administration

I. The Actors

The same cast of characters which formulated the INF accord within the United States government also fashioned the START framework under the Reagan administration. The one exception to this was the addition in November 1987 of Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci to replace the outgoing Caspar Weinberger. A former National Security Advisor under Reagan, Carlucci was noted by many as a pragmatist.¹ He was interested in pursuing arms control agreements which would enhance U.S. national security. In particular, he advocated taking a deliberative approach to the negotiations, as opposed to hurriedly accepting the new arms control proposals emanating from Mikhail Gorbachev. Stylistically, one of the more prominent changes

¹ George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), pp. 990-991. See also, Jay Wink, *On The Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 588.

that Carlucci brought to the Pentagon was allowing the Joint Chiefs to formally meet with other elements of the bureaucracy, particularly the State Department. As he noted, "one of the changes I made was to allow George Shultz to meet with the chiefs, even if I was not present. . .Cap Weinberger had placed some restrictions on the chiefs."²

II. The Structure

The policy process for formulating arms control positions for the United States government remained relatively consistent, despite the fact that the START I negotiations spanned two presidential administrations. In the Reagan administration, the interagency process was identical to the INF interagency structure. Indeed, in the meetings as far down as the interagency groups (IG), the personnel representing their various departments in START were exactly the same individuals involved in the INF IG.³ And like the INF IG, the START IG was the primary forum where the interagency process attempted to reach a consensus. As Christopher Lehman noted in 1984, "[the START IG] has been . . . the primary policy-making body of the United States government on strategic arms control."⁴ Since the formal process mirrored the INF structure, it does not need to be reiterated here.

² Telephone interview with Frank Carlucci, 24 February 1998. Also William Crowe, *The Line of Fire: From Washington to the Gulf, the Politics and Battles of the New Military* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), p. 127.

³ Telephone interview with former Assistant Secretary of State for Political and Military Affairs Richard Burt, 20 February 1998.

⁴ Christopher Lehman, "National Security Decision Making: The State Department's Role in Developing Arms Control Policy" in *National Security Policy*, Robert Pfaltzgraff and Uri Ra'anani, eds. (Meford, MA: Archon Books, 1984), p. 218.

Another similarity that START had with the INF process in the Reagan administration was the use of ad hoc forums. As in INF, they were not central in the process. They were largely used as discussion forums to gain consensus in the formal process. Indeed, the Chairman of the JCS actually organized one late in the Reagan presidency. With the departure of Defense Secretary Weinberger, formal contact between the Chiefs and the rest of the bureaucracy became a bit easier.⁵ Admiral Crowe soon took advantage of this opportunity by inviting many of the interagency actors to the Pentagon. These breakfasts at the Chairman's Mess in the Pentagon became a regular discussion forum towards the end of the Reagan administration. As ACDA Director William Burns noted:

Admiral Crowe held periodic breakfasts, where he would invite the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the national security advisor, as well as our negotiators (if they were in town), the Chiefs, and me [ACDA Director]. It was a relaxed setting where we could let our hair down and argue out the issues. The Chiefs were very frank in saying, "These are the limits to which we think we should go, and you shouldn't go beyond these limits in this particular activity."⁶

Crowe was very pleased at the new atmosphere at the Pentagon. He noted, "For the first time, people can come in here, bring up ideas, and not fear the consequences."⁷ These discussion forums allowed the national security community to work out problems before they reached the level of a presidential decision. And since they were sponsored by the JCS Chairman, the views of the military were always present in this forum.

⁵ Carlucci Interview, 24 February 1998.

⁶ William Burns, "Negotiating Arms Limitations II" in *Presidents and Arms Control*, Kenneth Thompson, ed. (New York: University Press of America, 1994), pp. 122-123.

III. Impact of the Joint Chiefs in the Formulation Process

The JCS played an active part in the START proposals generated by the Reagan administration. For the most part, they served as moderators within the administration. That is, they were not actively involved in initiating new proposals – instead, they evaluated the proposals of others and judged what was feasible from the standpoint of military sufficiency. This can be seen in their role in the initial proposal, as well as the aftermath to the Reykjavik Summit and the push late in Reagan's second term to conclude an early START agreement. At the same time, they were inadvertently responsible (to some degree) for one of the most significant arms control barriers – the Star Wars program.

The initial proposal of the Reagan administration for the START negotiations was heavily influenced by the JCS. This was due to their unique role as the keepers of the nation's security, as well as the political skill of their chairman, General David Jones. At the same time, public pressure on the administration to formulate a position also benefited the JCS in as much as it placed a time constraint on the formulation process.

Initially, the administration seemed paralyzed in the area of strategic arms control. It was nearly seventeen months after the administration took office that a START proposal was finally formulated.⁸ Part of this was related to the Reagan administration's delay in creating a formal interagency structure to formulate arms control proposals as

⁷ Strobe Talbott, *The Master of the Game: Paul Nitze and the Nuclear Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1988), p. 375.

⁸ Keith Shimko, *Images and Arms Control: Perceptions of the Soviet Union in the Reagan Administration* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), p. 181.

noted in the last chapter. It was also related to the deep divisions within the Reagan administration over how to proceed with arms control.

However, given the paralysis within the Reagan administration on arms control, Congress soon became a more active participant in the process by making specific proposals for negotiating positions, sending representatives to monitor negotiations, and threatening various administration defense programs that might undercut the interests of arms control. For instance, some in the Senate had pushed for Reagan to resubmit the SALT II treaty that had been negotiated by the Carter administration. Indeed, the creation of the START proposal was partly prompted so that the administration could side-step this option.⁹ Still, pressure from Congress would have a significant impact on strategic arms proposals emanating from the Reagan administration by imposing limitations on what was acceptable.

Public opinion was also driving the Reagan administration to negotiate, particularly during the first term. As Talbott notes:

[They were] getting impatient. A number of trends in public opinion were beginning to coalesce. A wide variety of religious and academic leaders were questioning the wisdom of the Administration's policies. Their concerns were partly a backlash against a series of controversial statements. . . by high government officials, including the President himself, about whether a limited nuclear war could be fought and won.¹⁰

The administration attempted to resist the influence of the freeze movement, in part because they believed that the protests were being encouraged and orchestrated by the

⁹ Lloyd Jensen, *Bargaining for National Security* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 240-244.

¹⁰ Strobe Talbott, *Deadly Gambits: The Reagan Administration and the Stalemate in Nuclear Arms Control* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 247.

Soviet Union.¹¹ Certainly domestic political factors were relevant to any arms control proposal considered by the administration. And while the public's clamor for a START proposal was momentarily quieted by the resumption of INF talks in the fall of 1981, it was only a slight reprieve. In the vacuum created by the lack of any official policy, the nuclear freeze movement seized the initiative in the winter of 1981-1982, resulting in several freeze resolutions in Congress that the administration opposed even though it had nothing to offer in their place.¹² Hence, the administration felt the need to seize control of the arms control agenda at the earliest opportunity.

But there was division over how to proceed. Just as had been the case with the Reagan administration's initial position on INF, the advisors to the president on START were mainly divided into two camps. And again, the two sides were led by OSD and the State Department. While the State Department advocated a limit on missile launchers, the civilians at the Pentagon thought that the first START proposal should seek to limit missile throw-weight.

Richard Perle led OSD's push for the inclusion of throw-weight. The Soviets held an extensive advantage over the United States in this area. Throw-weight is the total weight which can be carried by a missile over a particular range. It is the "business end" of the rocket, and it includes the armaments along with the hardware necessary to get them to the target. By focusing on throw-weight, Perle portrayed a drastic asymmetry between the U.S. and Soviet nuclear forces, which mandated that the Soviets cut a disproportionate share of their forces. Perle's throw-weight proposal was even more

¹¹ Ibid., p. 147.

¹² Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 181.

audacious than his “zero option” in the INF agreement. It called for the Soviets to remove two-thirds of their ICBM force, while the United States actually increased its throw-weight.¹³ Hence, he wanted to use the START agreement as a tool to improve the U.S. strategic position relative to the Soviets. In addition, the focus on throw-weight was an ideology index for Perle. This was a way of separating “true Reaganauts” from those who supported an approach similar to SALT II.¹⁴

Richard Burt at the State Department led those who favored a proposal which focused on limiting launchers. The JCS would also come to back this position, though initially they withheld judgment. This position focused on the weaknesses of the throw-weight argument. An agreement focusing on launchers would be far easier to verify than focusing on throw-weight. The United States intelligence community simply lacked the ability to accurately verify Soviet throw-weight within an acceptable margin of error. Second, throw-weight was a difficult concept for the general public to understand. Indeed, later in the administration, even Reagan confessed that he never understood “what that throw-weight business was all about.”¹⁵ Finally, a limit on launchers was seen as a more realistic basis for negotiations, given Perle’s throw-weight proposal.

During the first half of 1982, while the rest of the bureaucracy was battling over these two approaches to an initial START proposal, the Joint Chiefs were strangely absent. The JCS had been tasked with reviewing the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) – the U.S. contingency plan for fighting a full-scale nuclear war. With the new administration had come a new strategic mission. The “Defense Guidance” signed by

¹³ Ibid., p. 235.

¹⁴ Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, p. 234.

Defense Secretary Weinberger, and approved by the President, charged the JCS with planning how to prevail in a protracted nuclear war with the Soviets. As a result, the JCS was still represented in these initial interagency discussions, but the Chiefs put off taking a position on START.

However, there were other good reasons for the JCS to not take a position on START too quickly. One was tactical. The JCS did not want to take a position too soon lest they be pressured one way or another. This seems prudent, given that their experience in formulating the initial INF position was still fresh in their minds.¹⁶ Another reason for delay lay in the internal procedures of the JCS. The Chiefs preferred to present a united front to the rest of the bureaucracy on arms control issues, believing this increased the effectiveness of the JCS position.¹⁷ However, achieving consensus among the heads of the four military services can be a time consuming process which had often hampered the military in the interagency process.

Yet, the SIOP issue was soon to propel the JCS into the middle of the START formulation debate. The National Security Council charged the JCS with ensuring that any START proposal put forward in the negotiations would not interfere with the new strategic posture of the Reagan administration. That meant reconciling any START proposal with the SIOP. The problem was that the Chiefs were being asked to endorse two contradictory proposals -- a nuclear modernization program that would emphasize the deployment of new strategic systems and a strategic arms reduction proposal that would

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 254-255.

¹⁷ Barry Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analysis, 1988), p. 22.

dismantle or cancel many of the same strategic systems. As one JCS official stated, "We were being told by our Commander-in-Chief to be ready, on a moments notice, to destroy all of the Soviet Union – everything, everywhere, of any conceivable consequence or time-urgent value. At the same time we were supposed to climb on board the reductions bandwagon."¹⁸

The JCS favored a compromise position – a more modest SIOP and a more modest START proposal. They doubted that the U.S. Congress and general public would support a national defense strategy that put too much emphasis on plans to wage nuclear war. At the same time, the JCS also doubted whether the Soviets would accept an ambitious, not to mention one-sided, START proposal. It was largely out of a desire to reconcile START with SIOP that the Chiefs sided with the State Department and advocated that the initial START proposal should focus on launcher limits. Fewer launchers in a START treaty would require fewer targets in the SIOP.

The strategy worked – an alliance between the JCS and the State Department outflanked OSD in a 3 May 1982 NSC meeting. The State/JCS position was labeled the "the consensus proposal" and called for launchers to be the primary negotiating criteria in START I -- throw-weight could be considered in a second phase sometime in the future. By contrast, OSD continued to hold fast to the "throw-weight only" position. President Reagan liked the simplicity of focusing on launchers over the complexities of throw-weight.¹⁹ As a result, the NSC revised the SIOP requirements to a more moderate level; at the same time, the U.S. initial position on START focused on launchers, as opposed to

¹⁸ Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, p. 256.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

throw-weight which would affect the Soviet arsenal disproportionately. By the end of May, the administration had accepted the NSC's recommendation on the initial U.S. START position, giving the JCS its first real victory in the Reagan Administration.²⁰

Unfortunately, the opening proposals for the strategic arms reduction presented by President Reagan in a speech at Eureka College were doomed to failure from the beginning. In his speech, Reagan stated

I expect ballistic missile warheads, the most serious threat we face, to be reduced to equal levels, equal ceilings, at least a third below the current levels. To enhance stability, I would ask that no more than half of these warheads be land-based. I hope that these warhead reductions, as well as significant reductions in missiles themselves, could be achieved as rapidly as possible.²¹

Despite the attempt to make the proposal more palatable for the Soviets by focusing on the number of launchers and warheads over throw-weight, it was still too much. The proposal focused on deep reductions in land-based ICBM capability, which represented the major part of the Soviet nuclear deterrent.²² The initial Reagan position was rejected and the administration had to regroup for the next proposal.

But the chiefs would lose some of their strength. In 1982, the JCS was about to experience a significant turnover in personnel. Three of the five chiefs, including the Chairman, retired that year. Hence, the position of the chiefs after the initial proposal was an unknown quantity in the interagency process.

Not all of the U.S. negotiating positions were formed by the interagency process.

²⁰ Additional information on this meeting is currently being requested from the Reagan Library. However, at this time, the FOIA request has not been completed.

²¹ "Address at Commencement Exercises at Eureka College in Illinois, May 9, 1982," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982 (Part I)* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), pp. 581-582.

Public opinion and congressional attention placed some pressure on the process, and even affected specific elements of the U.S. negotiating position. One such element was “build down.” The basic idea of build-down was to permit modernization while forcing reductions by requiring old weapons to be retired as new ones came on line at a ratio of greater than 1 to 1. This arms control strategy also allowed for offsetting asymmetries – hence, Soviet advantages in ICBMs could be traded off for American advantages in cruise missiles. A number of very powerful congressional figures jumped on the build-down wagon, including Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisconsin) and Senators Gore (D-Tennessee), Cohen (R-Maine), and Nunn (D-Georgia). In 1983, Reagan also came to endorse the proposal.

The regular players in arms control formulation were not enthusiastic. The Joint Chiefs were not overly supportive of the plan but they made no moves against it. They ultimately acquiesced, surmising that the Soviet Union would reject the proposal anyway. However, many other elements in the interagency process also opposed the plan. The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, deliberately staffed with hard-liners as a way to counter the influence of the Secretary of State,²³ strongly opposed build-down until overruled by the president. The civilian chiefs in the Defense Department also opposed the build-down plan, the National Security Council was cool to the idea, and the State Department remained neutral. The primary support came from the president’s political advisers, who were concerned primarily about congressional and public criticism of the

²² Jensen, *Bargaining for National Security*, p. 218.

²³ Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, p. 11

president's record on arms control.²⁴

Hence, the administration's decision in October 1983 to incorporate the idea of build-down into the U.S. START proposal was not a direct reaction to any interagency initiative (or Soviet for that matter) but was rather a response to congressional pressure. It did not replace the administration's warhead limit on ICBMs, but its inclusion did signal a willingness to discuss the reduction of bombers and cruise missiles as the Soviet Union reduced its ballistic missiles. Unfortunately for supporters of build-down, this potentially significant change in the U.S. position occurred at an inopportune moment. The downing of KAL 007 in 1983 and the impending deployment of Pershings and GLCMs in Europe did not exactly create fertile ground for progress in START. As they had promised, in response to the Pershing II missile deployments in Europe, the Soviet Union suspended the START talks in November 1983.²⁵ Hence, build-down made it to the U.S. negotiating position, despite the lack of interagency support, but was not even considered by the Soviets in 1983.

Another major agenda issue related to the START negotiations was the future of the MX missile. The missile figured prominently in the Reagan administration's defense plans and was a significant part of why the Soviets were interested in negotiating a START treaty. Yet, the program had to be funded by Congress, and there was congressional concern over how the new missile would be deployed in order to make it more survivable. Some advocated a rail-based missile that would be mobile, but the costs associated with this were prohibitive. Another idea which was raised in the Reagan

²⁴ Jensen, *Bargaining for National Security*, pp. 220-221.

²⁵ Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 188.

administration was "Dense Pack." This strategy argued that by basing the missiles in silos that were close together, incoming Soviet missiles targeted on these weapons would collide with one another prior to impact. The Office of the Secretary of Defense was the primary advocate of this new system.

But there were many critics. For instance, citizen's groups in the western United States objected to the basing of this new weapon system in their territory because this would make them a primary target in any Soviet attack. One such group was "Utahans United Against MX." This was a very diverse coalition of citizens. Edwin Firmage, the organization's leader, noted this group was composed of everyone "from the Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth on one side to the National Tax Payers Union on the other -- they agreed upon nothing else except their opposition to MX."²⁶ They objected to the premise of one JCS official who stated whimsically, "It's too bad that somebody has to be the bull's eye of the target, but you're it." They questioned the wisdom of even having land-based systems, given the fact that technology had made sea- and air-based platforms just as accurate as land-based systems. In time, this organization's support, and its leader's connection with the church hierarchy, persuaded the Mormon Church to come out in opposition to the MX missile, as well.²⁷

Many in Congress also questioned the intelligence of this new system. For instance, Shimko notes that the MX program was in jeopardy because of the congressional "snicker factor" related to the Dense Pack proposal.²⁸ A presidential commission, headed by former National Security Advisor General Brent Scowcroft, was

²⁶ Telephone interview with Edwin Firmage, 20 April 1999.

²⁷ Ibid.

appointed in January 1983 to review the MX in the context of the nation's overall strategic posture and arms control strategy. When its report was released in April 1983, the commission issued only a lukewarm endorsement of the MX. They advocated the deployment of 100 MX missiles in existing Minuteman silos as an interim measure.²⁹ However, the commission found that no basing system could protect the MX from being targeted in a Soviet first strike.³⁰

The JCS also opposed the Dense Pack basing scheme. What is more, several members of the JCS said so publicly. According to Secretary of State George Shultz, "The unwillingness of the Joint Chiefs to support dense pack doomed the proposal."³¹ Hence, the JCS was able to block the policy initiative of OSD partly by appealing to constituencies beyond the executive branch. MX would proceed, albeit under a more traditional silo-based arrangement.

Not long after the Dense Pack proposal had been defeated, Reagan met with the JCS to discuss long-range strategic issues. General Vessey stressed that he was very concerned about whether the United States could keep pace with the Soviets, who were continuing to expand their ICBM force. Some were beginning to ask whether deterrence

²⁸ Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 187.

²⁹ This led to criticism from administration critics who noted that the justification for the MX was the vulnerability of the Minuteman missiles in their fixed silos. See Kenneth Kitts, *Presidential Commissions and National Security Issues* (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of South Carolina, 1995), pp. 135-137.

³⁰ Steven Kull, "The Role of Perceptions in the Nuclear Arms Race" in *Psychological Dimensions of War*, Betty Glad, ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 303.

³¹ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 248.

could be redefined utilizing some combination of offensive and defensive weapons.³² In particular, the Chiefs wondered whether the technology of anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems might have improved sufficiently from the 1970's to make their utilization worthwhile. But the JCS was not alone. During the debate over Dense Pack, a number of experts had already pointed out that the system would be more plausible if the clusters of MX launchers were protected by a new, improved ABM.³³

But this 11 February 1983 meeting with the JCS was to be an important one. Many people, including Reagan himself, point to this meeting as the one where President Reagan made the decision to explore strategic defense.³⁴ In particular, the argument of Chief of Naval Operations Admiral James Watkins that we should defend the American population, not avenge them, struck a cord with the President. The JCS believed that it might be possible to eventually deploy such a system and argued that the possibility should be researched. But that is a far cry from advocating a public commitment to anti-ballistic missile defenses.

However, this episode displays that while the JCS, or any other group of presidential advisors, may offer advice, the President is the ultimate arbiter of policy. The President may be simply looking for confirming advice for his own policy objectives, and may read more into the advice than is really prudent. Such was the case with Reagan and SDI. He took JCS willingness to explore the possibility that technology had reached

³² James Goodby, "How Presidents Make Decisions on Nuclear Weapons" in *Presidents and Arms Control*, Kenneth Thompson, ed. (New York: University Press of America, 1994), p. 42.

³³ Talbott, *The Master of the Game*, p. 192.

³⁴ A. Edwards, *Early Reagan* (New York: Morrow, 1987), p. 151.

such a level as to make ABM effective as evidence that it would in fact occur. And he said as much in a televised speech on 23 March 1983.³⁵ He asked

What if free people could live secure in the knowledge that their security did not rest upon the threat of instant U.S. retaliation to deter a Soviet attack, that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies?³⁶

He believed that the United States had the technological capability to develop and deploy a strategic defense, and that this should be a major national security goal.

Reagan wanted to pursue SDI deployments quickly even though most of his advisors were far more cautious. The Joint Chiefs were shocked at the President's precipitate action. They were also embarrassed by their own part in encouraging him. They had only meant to suggest that research and development on strategic defense get more consideration and funding. Chairman Vessey recommended that the President not give the speech. So did Secretary of State Shultz. Hearing of the plan just before the speech, he termed it "lunacy."³⁷ Even Defense Secretary Weinberger warned that he could not endorse it at the time – though his position on SDI would change later.

The Strategic Defense Initiative became bound up with the START treaty when the Soviets demanded that any arms control agreement include limitations on the SDI program. The Soviets saw SDI as destabilizing, because deterrence was founded on the fear of mutual destruction -- strategic defense hindered their ability to carry out their SIOP plan. As a result, the Soviets tied progress on arms control, which the United States

³⁵ Talbott, *The Master of the Game*, p. 193.

³⁶ "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security, March 23, 1983," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983 (Part I)* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), pp. 442-443.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

wanted, to limits on SDI, which the Soviets wanted. Secretary of State George Shultz was in favor of such a “grand compromise” if it could produce movement on the START (and INF) treaty. The Chiefs also came to favor this course. While they were initially enthusiastic about the additional defense funding resulting from SDI, in time the costs of SDI came to be seen as a potentially troublesome competitor as the defense budget began to decline in the mid-1980’s.³⁸ This caused the interests of the JCS to shift from its earlier position. As Army Chief of Staff General John Wickham noted, “the bloom came off the rose.”³⁹ The Chiefs also felt that trading the SDI research program for limitations on existing Soviet ICBMs was a useful compromise. As the U.S. negotiator Max Kampelman noted, by 1986, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were contending that a START treaty was very much in our interest because of our vulnerability to the Soviet SS-18⁴⁰ weapons that could cross the ocean in minutes.⁴¹

However, there was firm opposition to such a linkage and it ultimately foreclosed any grand compromise. OSD was firmly against limiting SDI in order to achieve a START agreement. Indeed, Defense Secretary Weinberger had reversed his initial opposition to SDI and become very supportive of strategic defense soon after its announcement. Partly this was due to his belief that this would restore American strategic superiority. In one statement before the Senate, Weinberger noted, “If we can

³⁸ Ibid., p. 375.

³⁹ Telephone interview with former Army Chief of Staff General John Wickham, 6 March 1998.

⁴⁰ The SS-18 “Satan” missile is the largest ICBM in the world. Capable of carrying ten 500 kiloton warheads over 11,000 kilometers, the Soviet Union received the exclusive right to possess these modern large ballistic missiles (MLBM) under the SALT I accord.

⁴¹ Max Kampelman, *Entering New Worlds: The Memoirs of a Private Man in Public Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), p. 340.

get a system that is effective and which we know can render their (Soviet) weapons impotent, we would be back in a situation we were in, for example, when we were the only nation with the nuclear weapon."⁴² However, other observers see the Weinberger shift on SDI as a policy tactic. They have called into question his motives in supporting SDI, contending that it was merely a way to derail a START agreement. As Shimko notes, "The fact that Weinberger's support for SDI grew in 1984 and 1985, just as the Soviets were making it clear that a START agreement would depend on SDI concessions, lends a certain plausibility to this thesis."⁴³ Indeed, one U.S. diplomat stated, "it took several months for people like Weinberger and Perle to see [SDI's] potential for mischief."⁴⁴ However, the most potent opposition came from the President, himself. Reagan felt very strongly about strategic defense and was unyielding on the issue. Hence, while the JCS were able to render advice, their position was overruled.

The Reykjavik summit in October of 1986 is the clearest example of non-involvement by the JCS in the START formulation process. Originally billed as a "planning summit," the negotiations between Reagan and Gorbachev yielded some bold and provocative new initiatives. In contrast to the U.S. preparations, Gorbachev had obviously come prepared to negotiate specific issues.⁴⁵ While no agreements were signed in Iceland, progress was made in several areas of arms control. The JCS, particularly its chairman, responded effectively in the aftermath of the summit and achieved significant

⁴² Steven Kull, *Minds at War: Nuclear Reality and the Inner Conflicts of Defense Policymakers* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 211.

⁴³ Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 201

⁴⁴ Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1989), p. 363.

⁴⁵ Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control*, p. 30.

impact on the summit proposals. Hence, while they were not initially involved, the Chiefs were able to affect the formulation of the proposals which would eventually reach the negotiating delegation in Geneva.

Perhaps the most controversial proposal to come from the summit was the zero ballistic missile (ZBM) option. Reagan and Gorbachev could not settle the issue in Reykjavik because of Reagan's refusal to sacrifice SDI, but ZBM could be used as a basis for future negotiations. Reagan had originally included the proposal in a July 1986 letter to Gorbachev. The JCS had seen the letter, but they had let it pass. It was a foolhardy scheme to scrap the forty year-old triad with a stroke of the pen, but why fuss over yet another arms control scheme? In short, they did not believe it was a serious proposal.⁴⁶ What is more, they did not believe that the Soviets would consider it, given their reliance on land-based ICBMs for the bulk of their nuclear deterrent. As a result, the Chiefs did not even order a study of the issue.⁴⁷

As a result, the JCS, as well as most of the U.S. government and its allies, were quite surprised to hear of the ZBM proposal. As one observer noted, "The disaster was the realization that Ronald Reagan was prepared to go down to zero on all nuclear weapons, and this was a shocker to our European friends, as well as to many Americans."⁴⁸ Many favored the elimination of nuclear weapons in the abstract, but few

⁴⁶ Kenneth Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace: Arms Summitry – A Skeptics Account* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), pp. 28-29.

⁴⁷ William Beecher, "What Happened at Reykjavik?" *Boston Globe Magazine* 30 November 1986, p. 17.

⁴⁸ Max Kampelman, "Serving Reagan as Negotiator" in *Foreign Policy in the Reagan Administration: Nine Intimate Perspectives*, Kenneth Thompson, ed. (New York: University Press of America, 1993), p. 82. See also, Shimko, *Images and Arms Control*, p. 209.

had given it serious consideration. In particular, what worried the chiefs was the lack of consensus within the government on the weapons that would remain *after* the heavy cuts were made. Unless the forces left behind were survivable, a START agreement would create the sort of instabilities that arms control is supposed to discourage.⁴⁹

Indeed, they believed that the president had gone too far. Admiral Crowe, on behalf of the military chiefs, told the President that the chiefs were alarmed at the idea of giving up ballistic missiles. Apparently, they had not taken Cap Weinberger seriously when he made that proposal, nor had they objected when the idea found its way into the letter from President Reagan to Gorbachev.⁵⁰ Crowe also made it known to the President that, if asked, he would tell the Congress that the JCS was against this proposal.⁵¹ In time, the ZBM proposal was dropped. Given the lack of support within his own government, and particularly from the military, Reagan lacked a basis to proceed. So, while the JCS did not dictate the formulation of the ZBM proposal, they did play a significant role in obstructing it.

With the signing of the INF accord in December 1987, there was great euphoria in the Reagan administration over the progress in international relations. So much so, that some wanted to press for the completion of the START treaty before the end of President Reagan's second term. However, the JCS objected to the new time constraints. And with President Reagan having pledged that he would not put forth any START agreement without the support of the military, the Chiefs were instrumental in preventing an early START agreement.

⁴⁹ Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, p. 405.

⁵⁰ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 706.

The Chiefs had concerns about the future of U.S. defense as a result of the momentous changes of the past few years. The dramatic changes that resulted from the Reykjavik summit and signing the INF treaty had left the JCS concerned. Not that they were opposed to a START agreement -- they were not. But the Chiefs were concerned that the issues had not been properly studied. Indeed, they had not initiated substantive studies on the impact of an early START agreement until December 1987.⁵² There simply was not the time to conclude a START treaty before Reagan left office, according to the JCS. And so the JCS stalled the momentum. As Defense Secretary Carlucci noted:

Damage limitation was their game; they were making clear an aversion to reaching a START agreement, at least on Reagan's watch. They did so, for example, by expressing reluctance to take part in various studies, because they would churn up decisions to be taken.⁵³

Hence, the JCS foreclosed the possibility of concluding a START agreement during Reagan's second term because they believed it was not in the interests of the nation's security, regardless of the political pressures to the contrary.

Yet, part of the Chiefs' reason for this delay was political. The JCS favored the basic terms of the START negotiations, but wanted to ensure that the resulting U.S. strategic forces would be less vulnerable to attack. In particular, they wanted some sort of mobility for their ICBM force. Yet, Admiral Crowe felt that the U.S. government, particularly the Congress, was too far from a consensus on this issue to proceed with START.⁵⁴ Even the White House was unsure of what type of mobile ICBM program to proceed with. The Chiefs were concerned that START would allow mobile ICBMs that

⁵¹ Crowe, *Line of Fire*, p. 178.

⁵² Pavel, *JCS Involvement in Nuclear Arms Control*, p. 24.

⁵³ Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, p. 406.

Congress would not fund. Diplomacy had moved far out ahead of military planning.⁵⁵

Hence, Admiral Crowe and the JCS balked at an early START for political reasons.

Bush Administration

START had made significant progress under Reagan, but it would be concluded by the Bush administration. With the new administration came a new atmosphere in the interagency process. In particular, the active involvement of the President and an informal grouping of his most senior advisors. The primary advisors to President Bush in the arms control arena were Secretary of State Jim Baker, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. The Joint Chiefs Chairman also enjoyed relatively good access. This was partly due to the congenial relationship that William Crowe, and later Colin Powell, enjoyed with the Secretary of Defense. Bob Gates took notice of this in his memoirs, “[Cheney] and Powell were a strong team, and when they disagreed – which was rare – Dick would encourage Colin to offer his views to the President.”⁵⁶

I. The Actors

President Bush came to the White House with unprecedented credentials in foreign affairs. He had served in the intelligence community, as an ambassador to China, and had just spent eight years as Vice President under Ronald Reagan. In terms of his

⁵⁴ Talbott, *The Master of the Game*, p. 377.

⁵⁵ Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Account of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 460.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

philosophy on arms control, Bush was not only interested in preserving national security for the United States, but promoting the stability of the Gorbachev regime in the Soviet Union. At the commencement speech at the Coast Guard Academy in May 1989, Bush noted that he believed that arms control needed to be placed in the overall context of the changes taking place in the Soviet Union. He believed that this could be used to improve stability in all aspects of the relationship between the superpowers, not just military power.⁵⁷

In contrast to their predecessors, the JCS chairmen who served Bush agreed with their president. President Bush's first Joint Chiefs Chairman was not of his own choosing. Admiral William Crowe, a holdover from the Reagan years, finished out his term at Bush's request.⁵⁸ Noted for his political acumen, Crowe had even established an unprecedented relationship with his Soviet counterpart, Marshall Sergei Akhromeyev. Crowe held several military-to-military dialogues with his Soviet counterpart – a first for a JCS Chairman. The two met in both the United States and the Soviet Union, and even continued their friendship after Crowe left active service.⁵⁹ Crowe retired in October 1989 and was replaced as JCS Chairman by General Colin Powell.

Like Crowe, Powell was also noted for his political skill. Many of his military colleagues noted that he was "half general, half politician."⁶⁰ Powell had not had a traditional army career, particularly in the later stages -- he enjoyed a wealth of political

⁵⁷ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 55.

⁵⁸ In fact, Bush asked Crowe to remain on for another term. See Crowe, *Line of Fire*, p. 337.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 271-279

assignments in Washington. In the early 1970's, he was accepted as a White House Fellow and served in the Office of Management and Budget under Frank Carlucci.⁶¹ As a Major General (two stars), he served as military assistant to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger instead of commanding a division.⁶² These civilian connections kept him in Washington serving the Reagan administration on the NSC staff, which he eventually led in 1988. With reference to arms control, he certainly focused on the aspect of protecting U.S. national security. But with the declining Soviet military position he came to endorse several initiatives. As he noted, "Gorbachev was a new man in a new age offering new opportunities for peace."⁶³

Richard Cheney served as the Secretary of Defense in the Bush administration. A former member of Congress, he and Powell were fairly close on arms control philosophy -- both saw arms control as a way to enhance U.S. national security. However, when the two differed, Cheney was the more likely to take the conservative view. For instance, while he welcomed the initiatives from Gorbachev, he was far more skeptical that the new outlook in the Soviet Union would last.⁶⁴

The lead arms control advisor for the Bush administration was the Secretary of State James Baker.⁶⁵ Baker saw arms control as only one element of the U.S.-Soviet relationship and thought that it should reflect the broader political considerations of the

⁶⁰ H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), p. 288. Also, Crowe, *Line of Fire*, p. 229.

⁶¹ John Prados, *Keeper of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), p. 543.

⁶² Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 288.

⁶³ Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 341.

⁶⁴ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 208.

⁶⁵ Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 210.

relationship. He wanted to show Gorbachev that the administration supported their reforms. He believed that cautious negotiating stances and U.S. "testing" of Soviet sincerity might help Gorbachev's domestic opponents stymie continued cooperation. Baker also felt that arms control discussions were dominated by esoteric technical discussions and out of touch with the rapidly changing political context.⁶⁶ As a result, he consistently took the most positive view towards new arms control agreements with the Soviet.

The last prominent advisor to President Bush on arms control was his National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft. A former Lieutenant General in the Air Force, he also held a doctorate in political science from Columbia University. Scowcroft was also no stranger to the NSC – he had previously served the Ford Administration as National Security Advisor. Like Cheney, he saw danger in Gorbachev. Scowcroft believed that Gorbachev was different in style, but not in substance, from his predecessors. As he noted, "(Gorbachev) was attempting to kill us with kindness, rather than bluster."⁶⁷ As a result, Scowcroft was interested in taking a cautious approach to arms control that could lock-in U.S. military advantages over the Soviets.

II. The Structure

In terms of formal structure, the Bush START apparatus was much like its predecessors. The principal decision-making forum, the NSC, was supported by a

⁶⁶ James Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace 1989-1992* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), pp. 70-73.

⁶⁷ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 13.

hierarchy of interagency groups. And as had been the case with previous administrations the JCS was actively represented at all levels.

At the level just below the National Security Council was the Deputy's Committee. Chaired by Robert Gates, this undersecretary-level group was designed to "oversee the interagency NSC process – policy and contingency planning, the development of policy options, the decision-recommending and the decision-making process, and the management of day-to-day national security operations."⁶⁸ All administrations have had a senior-level interagency group to carry out this function, with varying degrees of success. And all administrations have had military participation on this committee. For the Deputies Committee, the Joint Chiefs were represented by the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Air Force General Robert Herres.⁶⁹

In support of this group was the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) for arms control. Chaired by Dr. Arnold Kanter of the National Security Council, this body was composed of assistant-secretary level personnel in the bureaucracy and researched issues in support of the higher-level interagency forums. The assistant to the Chairman, General Howard Graves, was usually the representative for the Chiefs.

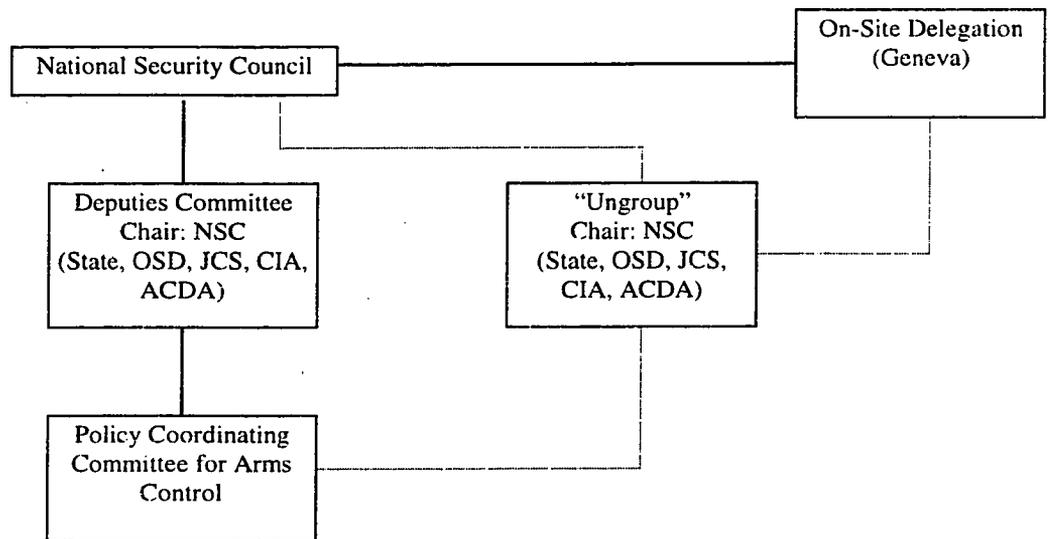
However, to examine the formal interagency structure would only tell a fraction of the story. Given President Bush's proclivity for ad hoc, informal advisory forums, the creation of the "Ungroup" in 1990 should not be entirely unexpected. Named the "Ungroup" because it was supposed to be so secret that it did not have a name, it was designed to allow the administration to pick the people they had confidence in on certain

⁶⁸ Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 248.

⁶⁹ General Herres was later replaced by Admiral David Jeremiah

issues.⁷⁰ Indeed, the Ungroup was composed of individuals at the undersecretary and assistant secretary levels, bridging the gap between the PCC and the Deputies Committee.⁷¹ Indeed, many members of the Ungroup were also members of the Deputies Committee.

Chart 5. Bush Interagency Structure for the START Negotiations



The mission of the group was to act as an informal coordinating group to discuss the evolving relationship with the Soviet Union. Some in the administration, including the President, believed that the interagency process was too cumbersome to handle the technological or political implications of controversial arms control proposals. The NSC needed a group to form a consensus among the bureaucracy and crystallize these issues

⁷⁰ Telephone interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Steven Hadley, 13 November 1997.

⁷¹ On arms control issues, ACDA Director Ron Lehman was also included. Telephone interview with former Assistant to the Chairman Lieutenant General Howard Graves, 23

for the NSC – the Ungroup was designed to fill that gap.⁷² In fact, the Ungroup often functioned in lieu of the Deputies Committee. As Assistant Secretary of Defense Steven Hadley noted, “it was almost as if the Ungroup was the Deputies Committee for the purposes of arms control.”⁷³ It was always possible for an issue to go through the Deputies Committee on its way to the NSC, but more often than not the Deputies Committee was bypassed. The group also functioned as a support cell to negotiations in Geneva and Presidential Summits. The military was typically represented by the Assistant to the Chairman and/or the Vice Chairman of the JCS.

III. Impact of the Joint Chiefs in the Formulation Process

The Bush administration took a cautious approach to the START negotiations. Upon assuming the presidency, George Bush stated that work that had been done on START under the previous administration would be an excellent foundation upon which to build, but he reserved the right to change and modify some US positions. Eventually, Bush decided against any fundamental changes in the United States negotiating stand.⁷⁴ With the START treaty having been in negotiations for nearly seven years, and George Bush having been a member of the administration during that time, a minimal amount of change seemed reasonable. But in taking the time to conduct an intensive strategic review, Bush moved slowly on the START negotiations. It was six months into the new

February 1998. Also, telephone interview with Army Representative to the Chairman’s Staff Group Colonel Rich Witherspoon, 18 January 1998.

⁷² Telephone interview with Senior National Security Council official, 29 January 1998.

⁷³ Hadley interview, 13 November 1997.

⁷⁴ Michael R. Gordon, “Pentagon Offers Plan to Help Smooth Arms Talks.” *New York Times* 16 June 1989, p. A6.

administration before the next round of the Nuclear and Space Talks was convened in Geneva. However, despite the minimal amount of change from the previous administration, there was still conflict over some of these positions and the JCS played a significant role in the interagency negotiations.

One of the first agenda items that many expected to be removed from the U.S. START position was Ronald Reagan's steadfast opposition to linking any START treaty to any restrictions on the SDI program. Reagan's determination on this position was largely against the counsel of many of his advisors. The military, believing that SDI was too costly and perhaps not as beneficial to national security as was once thought, were one of the first advisors to press for "flexibility" on the issue.

Before the Bush administration's first round in the Nuclear and Space Talks, the JCS recommended that the United States no longer insist on the right to eventually deploy extensive anti-missile defenses. This was for several reasons. First, given the fiscal climate in the United State government in the late 1980's, the JCS continued to worry that SDI research was taking funding away from other military programs which were more beneficial to national security. Representatives of the Joint Chiefs also raised the possibility that the Soviets might be in a better position to deploy new anti-missile defenses than the United States.⁷⁵ Finally, the JCS also believed that the START treaty, as it was forming up, was worth sacrificing the SDI program. As Goldstein notes, "From Washington's point of view, a major attraction of the agreement is that it will halve

⁷⁵ Michael R. Gordon, "Bush Resists Pressure to Soften Antimissile Policy." *New York Times* 9 June 1989, p. A3.

Moscow's SS-18 force and eliminate Soviet advantages in the number of ICBM warheads and throw weight."⁷⁶ In short, START now was more important than SDI later.

However, the JCS position was at odds with many in the government. Civilians in the defense department, as well as some state department officials still advocated retaining the SDI program.⁷⁷ Bush was also not prepared to abandon SDI. He was moving cautiously in his consideration of resuming the START talks and unilaterally dropping SDI would antagonize defense hardliners within the administration and Congress.⁷⁸ By June of 1989, Bush had not affirmed Reagan's controversial reading of the ABM agreement, but at the same time had only commented that the US "must fully protect its options."⁷⁹ In time, the Soviets gave up their demand. However, the attempt by the JCS to revise the U.S. position on SDI was unsuccessful.

Another area where the JCS attempted to alter the U.S. position was on air-launched cruise missiles. The Reagan administration had contended that only loose limits should be set on air-launched cruise missiles, asserting that relatively slow cruise missiles are less threatening than faster ballistic missiles.⁸⁰ However, the Soviets continued to press that each strategic bomber be counted as having the maximum number of cruise missiles that it can carry. With the new administration, the JCS again tried to move the U.S. government closer to agreement with the Soviets.

⁷⁶ Martin Goldstein, *Arms Control and Military Preparedness from Truman to Bush* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Co., 1993), p. 245.

⁷⁷ Michael R. Gordon, "Joint Chiefs Urge Restraint On 'Star Wars' in Strategic Talks." *New York Times* 1 June 1989, p. A12.

⁷⁸ Strobe Talbott and Michael Beschloss, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), pp. 116-119.

⁷⁹ R. Jeffrey Smith, "No Shift on Missile Defense Foreseen." *Washington Post* 9 June 1989, p. A20.

This is not to say that they had initiated this proposal. They were acting in response to President Bush's order for the defense bureaucracy to come up with several new concessions to the Soviets on Strategic Arms. One of the main points of contention with the Soviets dealt with ALCM counting rules. In a June 1989 NSC meeting, the JCS introduced a new proposal on ALCMs.⁸¹ The Chiefs proposed adding additional equipment to strategic bombers so that the Soviets could determine from satellite photos how many cruise missiles were aboard. However, the Chiefs still insisted that this number should be fewer than the maximum possible and still rejected on-site inspections.⁸² Such an approach would move the United States closer to the Soviet position, and the position was later incorporated into the treaty.

Another cruise missile issue which the JCS had an impact on was the exclusion of conventionally armed cruise missiles. In particular, the military was adamant that the START treaty not place limitations on "Tacit Rainbow" ALCMs. These were cruise missiles designed for B-52s in attacking radar installations, and the military had plans to procure more than 5,000 of these weapons. They pressed for a U.S. position which would not include these weapons in the START strategic totals and were ultimately successful in having this provision included in the treaty.⁸³

One of the positions which the Bush administration did reverse from the Reagan years was the U.S. stance on mobile missiles. The Reagan administration had been

⁸⁰ Gordon, "Pentagon Offers Plan," p. A6.

⁸¹ R. Jeffrey Smith, "Baker to Offer Soviets Nuclear Arms Concessions." *Washington Post* 14 May 1990, p. A15.

⁸² R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Position on Strategic Arms Unsettled." *Washington Post* 16 June 1989, p. A34.

leaning towards less restrictions on these weapons, but had not formally altered its position by the time they had left office. This reticence had been partly due to the objections of numerous groups in the western United States who protested the potential danger that the new basing mode would present to them.⁸⁴ In late 1989, President Bush announced his decision to withdraw the U.S. START position on banning mobile ICBMs, contingent upon U.S. congressional approval of funding for mobile ICBM programs.

However, there was significant opposition to this position from across the spectrum. Many in Congress were wary of the additional costs of the new systems, not to mention their concerns over the destabilizing effect that mobile ICBMs might have on deterrence if they proliferated. Indeed, when former Joint Chiefs Chairmen Jones, Vessey, and Crowe all testified that there was no strategic need for mobile ICBMs, many in Congress agreed.⁸⁵ The National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft also agreed. He continued to advocate plans to ban mobile ICBMs into 1990, but to no avail. Secretary of State James Baker, Defense Secretary Cheney and JCS Chairman Colin Powell persuaded the President that mobile ICBMs were necessary.⁸⁶ Hence, despite the widespread opposition to mobile ICBMs from former JCS Chairmen, Congress, and the National Security Advisor, the provision for mobile ICBMs remained.

⁸³ R. Jeffrey Smith, "Cruise Missiles Have Been 'Vexing' Problem in Talks." *Washington Post* 20 May 1990, p. A1.

⁸⁴ Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), pp. 300-302.

⁸⁵ R. Jeffrey Smith, "2 Missiles Unnecessary, Ex-Chiefs Say." *Washington Post* 3 February 1990, p. A5.

⁸⁶ R. Jeffrey Smith, "Scowcroft Seeking Ban on Some Mobile Missiles." *Washington Post* 15 January 1990, p. A1.

One of the last contentious issues in the START negotiations dealt with the concept of “Downloading.” Since the START treaty would dictate a major reduction in nuclear warheads, there would be too many launchers if each carried its maximum number. With the Soviets in an economically-depressed situation, they raised the possibility of downloading existing weapons – lowering the number of warheads on existing weapons – versus investing in new systems which would carry fewer warheads. However, the problem with this strategy is verification. To restore the maximum number of warheads on a missile would be a relatively simple affair and take very little time – this was the “breakout” that many in the U.S. government feared. Hence, downloading had the potential to upset the strategic balance very quickly, and reduced stability in the deterrence relationship as a result.

The primary opponent of downloading in the U.S. government was National Security Adviser Scowcroft. He argued that because of the fear of a Soviet breakout, no START treaty at all was better than one in which the Soviets got their way on downloading. However, he had few allies on this issue. Secretary of State Baker was willing to forgo the issue in order to get the agreement signed. At the same time, neither Secretary of Defense Cheney nor General Powell were so adamant on the issue.

The reasons for JCS Chairman Powell’s stance are instructive of his political savvy. He was not overly concerned about the potential pitfalls of downloading, largely due to his perception of the international situation. As Powell contended, he did not fully share the fear of many of his colleagues’ that the new Soviet Union would give way to a reincarnation of the old, malevolent one. About downloading and breakout, he told Cheney in the spring of 1991, “I’m not as exercised about it as Brent.” However, it was

not for technical or military reasons, but for political reasons. Powell believed that the situation was changing so fast and so profoundly that someday many would wonder why they had ever argued over this. “With everything that’s going on over there, I have a hard time convincing myself I should stay awake at night worrying about the Sovs’ future breakout capability.”⁸⁷

Hence, the JCS Chairman did not object to Soviet downloading largely due to his political considerations, not strategic. His support, combined with the advice of Defense Secretary Cheney and Secretary Baker, overcame the objects of National Security Advisor Scowcroft. In the end, the U.S. accepted Soviet downloading on three types of ICBMs.⁸⁸ And with this concession, the negotiations were finally concluded in July 1991.

Analysis

I. JCS Involvement

As in INF, the first years of the START process were marked by strong differences between the civilian and military departments in the Pentagon. Max Kampelman, a lead U.S. negotiator in the Nuclear and Space talks, even saw this distinction between the OSD and JCS representatives. He argued that the conventional wisdom that ‘the military’ resist arms reduction is simply wrong. Some do; some don’t. In this case, a distinction must be made between the civilian and military people who represented the Secretary of Defense and the military people assigned to the NST delegation from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the formal military establishment. The former

⁸⁷ Talbott and Beschloss, *At the Highest Levels*, pp. 372-373.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 404-405.

seemed to be supervised by those who probably opposed any agreement with the Soviets; the latter clearly worked under instructions to help find an agreement in our national interest.⁸⁹ Such disagreements appear to have been driven largely by personal factors, such as ideology and personality differences. For instance, the problems between the OSD and JCS, which arose with Secretary Weinberger and Richard Perle, seemed to fade away under Frank Carlucci and Richard Cheney. Still, in any confrontation between the two organizations, the Defense Secretary will enjoy the upper hand since he is the formal superior. In such cases, military advice can be stymied.

II. Goldwater-Nichols and Its Impact

However, sometimes military advice has been hampered by the military's own internal decision-making structure and supporting bureaucracy. Calls for reform of the Joint Chiefs structure had been a consistent refrain for some time. The most common complaint by policymakers has been that the Joint Chiefs were too slow in putting forth positions in the interagency process. Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam contended that the JCS had to have an inter-service meeting before they could say anything,⁹⁰ and ACDA Director Kenneth Adelman noted that generally JCS advice was not "crisp."⁹¹ Another observer noted, "in the old system, they often spent so much time [negotiating] among themselves that by the time they had come up with a position, the train had already

⁸⁹ Kampelman, *Entering New Worlds*, pp. 326-327.

⁹⁰ Telephone interview with former Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam, 30 March 1998.

⁹¹ Telephone interview with former ACDA Director Ambassador Kenneth Adelman, 15 January 1998.

left the station.”⁹² What is more, some administrations would wait for the JCS to come to agreement, while other administrations had not.⁹³ For instance, Defense Secretary McNamara usurped the JCS role in policy process by replacing their advice with systems analysis.⁹⁴

The root of this problem was that the JCS was composed of a Chairman *and the heads of the four services* – since, the Chairman was not the formal leader of this group, he had no formal ability to force a consensus. As a result, the JCS would have to reach an agreed position as a group. Part of this was customary, since the JCS could present a divided opinion, but had traditionally not done so. And once this decision was reached, it was a consensus position which often meant that it was the lowest common denominator between the Chiefs. This led to positions which were considered “watery” in addition to time consuming.⁹⁵

Another problem which consistently hampered the military voice in the interagency process was the supporting bureaucracy. This was for several reasons. First, the Joint Staff, while being composed of members from all four services, was separate and distinct from the individual service bureaucracies and had no formal authority to speak on their behalf. Hence, most proposals had to be submitted by the Joint Staff to the services for evaluations and comments. The existence of an interagency process within one of the agencies involved in the interagency process contributed to the JCS problems mentioned above. Another problem was that while the services had formally endorsed

⁹² Telephone with former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, 5 January 1998.

⁹³ Confidential telephone interview, 13 January 1998.

⁹⁴ Edward Luttwak, *The Pentagon and the Art of War: The Question of Military Reform* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p. 269.

joint operations, the individual service cultures remained quite parochial. Assignments to the Joint Staff were short and not viewed by many as career enhancing. The end result was that the continuity and expertise that many interagency actors enjoyed due to being career civil servants, were lacking for the JCS. Finally, there was the question of control. The Joint Staff served the JCS, not the Chairman. Just as with making any other decision, guidance from that body was typically time consuming and somewhat vague. And from the perspective of the Chairman, the additional support was necessary, as his personal staff was not sufficient for his position.⁹⁶ The bottom line was that the committee structure of the JCS, combined with the deficiencies in the Joint Staff, served to hamper military advice in interagency affairs.

The solution, some felt, was to formally center power in the JCS under the Chairman. In particular, many believed that the “principal military advisor to the President” should only be the Chairman, and not the entire JCS. This would allow the Chairman to offer advice in his own right, not just as spokesman for a committee consensus. The reformers also called for the Joint Staff to be made more effective by increasing the time and prestige of Joint Staff appointments in the services, as well as placing the staff directly under the control of the Chairman. Soon after his retirement as Joint Chiefs Chairman, General David Jones became one of the most outspoken advocates for this reform. In addition, other former JCS members had also aided this cause by commenting on the time-consuming nature of their decision methods and the

⁹⁵ Elmo Zumwalt, *On Watch: A Memoir* (New York: Quadrangle Press, 1976), p. 284.

⁹⁶ Witherspoon interview, 18 January 1998.

effects of those methods on their agreed positions.⁹⁷ In 1986, these calls were finally heeded and the reforms instituted.

These reforms were calculated to be profound, and to have a relevance beyond JCS participation in arms control. Yet, in the end, the impact was minimal. The Goldwater-Nichols reforms essentially ratified a pre-existing relationship. Many of those interviewed noted the fact that in the day-to-day interface between the Joint Chiefs and the senior-levels of government had always been through the Chairman.⁹⁸ Being the JCS member on the scene provides a unique opportunity in the presentation of JCS advice. As one former JCS member noted, “[the Chairman] was the guy in the room.”⁹⁹ At the same time, the first JCS Chairman to have this new power was cautious in its application. Admiral Crowe was careful not to abuse his new prerogative. So while he led discussions, Crowe was careful to still forge a consensus among the JCS.¹⁰⁰

This is not to say that the Goldwater-Nichols reforms had no impact. While Crowe exercised his new authority with caution, General Powell used the tools of

⁹⁷ James Holloway, III, “The Quality of Military Advice,” *AEI Foreign Policy and Defense Review*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1980), pp. 24-36. Also, Edward Meyer, “JCS Reorganization: Why Change? How Much Change?” in *The Reorganization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: A Critical Analysis*, Allen Millett, et. al., eds. (Washington: Pergammon Brassey’s, 1986), pp. 54-56.

⁹⁸ Telephone interview with former Air Force Chief of Staff General Larry Welch, 3 March 1998. Also, telephone interview with Military Representative to the CFE Delegation Major General Adrian St. John, 11 November 1997.

⁹⁹ Welch interview, 3 March 1998.

¹⁰⁰ Willard Webb and Ronald Cole, *The Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington: Department of Defense, 1989), p. 116. Graves interview, 23 February 1998. Also, Wickham interview, 6 March 1998.

Goldwater-Nichols a little more often.¹⁰¹ Certainly this is consistent with Powell's perception of Goldwater-Nichols. He noted:

This act, for the first time, gave the Chairman of the JCS real power. As 'principal military advisor,' he could give his own counsel directly to the Secretary and the President. He was no longer limited to presenting the chiefs' watered-down consensus recommendations and then whispering his personal views.¹⁰²

Indeed, with reference to arms control negotiations, General Powell felt that the new powers were able to help the Defense Secretary in driving his military colleagues to consensus.¹⁰³ Certainly, this was the perception of his colleagues in the interagency process.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, in this study, there is little conclusive evidence to suggest that the reforms led to a dramatically different structure for military advice. So, while the potential for change is there and appears to be at work, it did not radically alter military participation in strategic arms control.

III. Traits of the JCS Chairmen

The START process spanned the tenure of four JCS chairmen. As Generals Jones and Vessey have been described elsewhere, analysis of their advisory styles will not be discussed here. However, suffice it to say, the evidence from this chapter confirms the earlier assessments of these two men. Admiral Crowe and General Powell were the last two chairmen to deal with the START I accord, and their skills in pushing the military position in the interagency process rightly places both as "bureaucratic manipulators."

¹⁰¹ Graves interview, 23 February 1998.

¹⁰² Powell, *My American Journey*, p. 411.

¹⁰³ Telephone interview with former JCS Chairman General Colin Powell, 9 March 1998.

¹⁰⁴ Hadley interview, 13 November 1997.

The actions of Admiral Crowe in the START negotiations, not to mention the perceptions of his peers in the interagency process, confirm this assessment of his operating style. Given his actions in fostering interagency dialogue with the Pentagon breakfasts, as well as his ability to forestall the ZBM and early START initiatives, Crowe seemed to be a very astute political leader. As one civilian colleague noted:

Instead of addressing the purely military impact of various proposals, Crowe would at times predict what would fly with Congress or foreign allies of the United States. If you took off his uniform, the former official added, Crowe frequently sounded like just another political advisor, albeit one with a deep understanding of the military.¹⁰⁵

This statement was affirmed in every interview session where Admiral Crowe was discussed.

His successor, General Colin Powell, had a similar reputation, and also qualifies as a “bureaucratic manipulator.” Peer assessments confirm this view. He was universally recognized as being a politically-sophisticated military advisor who was capable of providing well-rounded advice on security issues. Indeed, his own military colleagues recognized Powell as “the master of the Washington bureaucracy.”¹⁰⁶ Certainly, his awareness of political dynamics was evident from his stance on the downloading issue in START. He did not move to block the initiative because of his perception of the international political scene, not the military picture.

From this study, it appears that the JCS Chairman are becoming increasingly politically astute. However, it is unclear whether this is coincidental or part of a larger

¹⁰⁵ Bob Woodward, “The Admiral of Washington,” *Washington Post Magazine* 24 September 1989, pp. 43-44.

trend. David Tarr believes that it is related to the Goldwater-Nichols reforms – that the elevation of the Chairman to principal military advisor has made him more attuned to the prevailing political sirens of the Washington scene.¹⁰⁷ However, this study cannot evaluate that possibility. There have been politically-astute chairmen before Goldwater-Nichols, as well as after. What this study can conclude is that politically-astute chairmen – the “bureaucratic manipulators” – appear to be able to better advocate military positions in the interagency process of arms control formulation.

Conclusion

After nine years of negotiations, the START treaty was signed in a July 1991 summit in Moscow. This process highlights the limits and possibilities of public, congressional, and international pressure on the formulation process. These factors underlie the interagency process and can pressure the interagency actors towards an agreement. However, that does not affect the JCS more than any other actor in the process. What does have a significant impact on the JCS is their relationship with their civilian superiors in the OSD. This fact inhibited JCS advice under Weinberger. Under Carlucci the situation improved noticeably, and under Cheney the relations helped to ensure effective JCS participation at the highest levels of government.

¹⁰⁶ The official who actually made that statement was General George Lee Butler. See Richard Kohn, “Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations,” *National Interests* (Spring 1994), p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ David Tarr, “New Military Missions and Civil-Military Decision Making,” Paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, Chicago, Illinois, 18-20 April 1996.

Chapter 6

Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty

Introduction

Conventional arms negotiations have been both very long and very short processes. The Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) and the Conventional Armed-Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations both sought to limit conventional arms on the European continent. Yet the MBFR negotiations, which began in 1973, lasted nearly 15 years without reaching any agreement. On the other hand, CFE talks began in March 1989 and were successfully concluded 20 months later. The reason for such disparity between the two negotiations has its roots in the international context, as well as the resulting attention from senior-level policy makers in the U.S. government.

These senior-level policy makers included the Joint Chiefs of Staff generally, and the JCS Chairman in particular. As has almost always been the case, the Chiefs were represented in all interagency discussions on the issue. What is more, the Chairman was one of the President's closest advisors, serving in many informal discussions with the President and his other top advisors. The military truly played a significant role in the CFE formulation process.

CFE presented some unique problems for the interagency process – problems which might be expected to hamper JCS participation, in particular. First was the time pressure related to the rapidly changing international context. The political landscape of

Eastern Europe was changing so quickly that short decision times on arms control were needed, lest the CFE process become irrelevant to European security. Yet, given the JCS's traditional need for consensus and time to have the Joint Staff study the issues, one might expect military advice to lag behind and eventually lose relevance. But this was not the case. With the new powers given the Chairman under Goldwater-Nichols, Admiral Crowe (and later General Powell) was able to lead the Chiefs to agreement fast enough to keep pace with the accelerated process. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz noted that the Chiefs "were quicker off the mark" in making decisions on CFE thanks to the Goldwater-Nichols reforms.¹ Hence, while the Joint Staff and the military bureaucracy were not always able to participate, the Chairman and the JCS were always involved.²

Another issue which one might expect to hamper the military advice of the JCS was the multilateral nature of the negotiations. The CFE negotiations involved not two countries, but two alliances – twenty-three nations in all. Hence alliance management and other politically-related questions arose. The interagency process in the U.S. government was not necessarily the final point of resolution for NATO arms control positions. As a result, one might expect the JCS to be at a disadvantage relative to other foreign affairs advisors, such as the State Department. Yet, again the JCS was not hampered by this. The Chiefs were led by two of the most politically-astute officers to serve as Chairman. Hence, by virtue of the organizational reforms of the JCS, as well as

¹ Interview with former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, 5 January 1998.

² Telephone interview with former Military Representative to the CFE Delegation Major General Adrian St. John, 11 November 1997.

the personality of the JCS Chairman, the military was able to overcome these potential obstacles and participate effectively in a dynamic arms control process.

Reagan Administration

With a few exceptions, European conventional arms control had not usually been a high profile issue for Congress, cabinet-level officials, or the general public.³ With more high-profile agreements underway, such as the INF and START negotiations, conventional arms reductions which were being explored under the MBFR framework received little attention from the principal decision makers in the U.S. government. As the military advisor to the U.S. MBFR delegation, Major General Adrian St. John, noted, conventional arms control was typically on the “back burner.”⁴

Directives from the Reagan White House concerning conventional arms reductions are instructive. In National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 31, the administration presented relatively inflexible negotiating instructions to the MBFR delegation in Vienna. The U.S. government was prepared to negotiate substantial troop reductions on both sides of the Iron Curtain, but only in isolation from nuclear arms negotiations. There was to be no linkage. The crux of the problem was that NATO regarded the apparent Warsaw Pact advantage in troops, tanks, and conventional weapons as one that required maintenance of de facto western superiority in intermediate range nuclear weapons, while Warsaw Pact representatives contended that NATO’s nuclear and

³ J. Philip Rogers and Phil Williams, “The United States and CFE” in *The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty: Cold War Endgame*, Stuart Croft, ed. (Aldershot, UK: Dartmouth), p. 70.

⁴ St. John interview, 11 November 1997.

technological lead in Europe required the Pact to support very large armies.⁵ With neither side willing to give ground, conventional arms negotiations made no progress through the early 1980's.

However, the rise of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union brought some movement on this issue, as it had in the other areas. By early summer 1986, there was tangible evidence that the new political thinking in the Soviet Union might be more than propaganda. On June 11, 1986 an official Warsaw Pact proposal was issued. Labeled the "Budapest Appeal," it envisaged a three-phased reduction of conventional and nuclear armaments in the ATTU zone. Despite the cynicism of many in the Reagan administration, the United States and its NATO allies responded favorably to the Budapest Appeal, calling for a new round of talks termed the Conventional Stability Talks (CST). However, there was little consensus on what the CST talks should discuss. Many in the U.S. government saw the talks as little more than a public relations response to Gorbachev's initiatives.⁶ With neither side having altered their basic positions, and with high-level interest still absent, the talks foundered.

But the strategic calculus of Western European security, and the western attention to conventional arms control, changed with the signing of the INF Treaty on 8 December, 1987. The INF Treaty affected the American thinking on conventional arms control in two significant ways. First, and most important, the elimination of Intermediate Nuclear Forces highlighted the Warsaw Pact's quantitative conventional superiority in Europe.

⁵ Christopher Simpson, *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations: The Declassified History of U.S. Political and Military Policy, 1981-1991* (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), p. 62.

⁶ Rogers and Williams in Croft, "The United States and CFE," p. 70.

The United States had long held that intermediate-range nuclear weapons could off-set the tremendous quantitative advantage enjoyed by the Soviets and their allies in any European conflict.⁷ However, with the process of eliminating INF weapons underway, conventional arms control gained unprecedented political salience. Suddenly, redressing of the conventional imbalance which had long existed in Europe was much more important. At the same time, the unprecedented degree of openness and intrusive inspections that the Soviets accepted for the INF verification regime accelerated American demands and expectations for openness in other areas. Arms control agreements which limit ground-based weaponry (e.g., tanks, artillery, etc.) are exceptionally difficult to verify. However, with the new precedent set in INF, a verifiable conventional arms agreement now seemed possible. However, agreement to conclude a new round of talks, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe negotiations, occurred too late for the Reagan administration.

Bush Administration

The story of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations is the story of leadership from the top. Indeed, this was the foreign policy leadership style which characterized most issues in the Bush administration. In CFE, President Bush was actively involved in formulating new initiatives for the negotiations. What is more, he

⁷ This is interesting in light of the fact that many senior military officers did not believe this to be a viable strategy. Admiral Crowe noted that even with the employment of tactical nuclear weapons, many U.S. wargame simulations still predicted that a Warsaw Pact offensive into Western Europe would achieve its objectives. See, William Crowe, *The Line of Fire: From Washington to the Gulf, the Politics and Battles of the New Military* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 102-105.

relied extensively on an ad hoc grouping of senior administration officials for advice and support. The result was a significant reduction in the interagency negotiations that were often as contentious (and in some cases more so) than the actual negotiations. As Bolton noted, “The President deliberately chose to place decisions about national security issues in the hands of his closest advisors. . . There just was not much time for bureaucratic infighting.”⁸

I. Structure

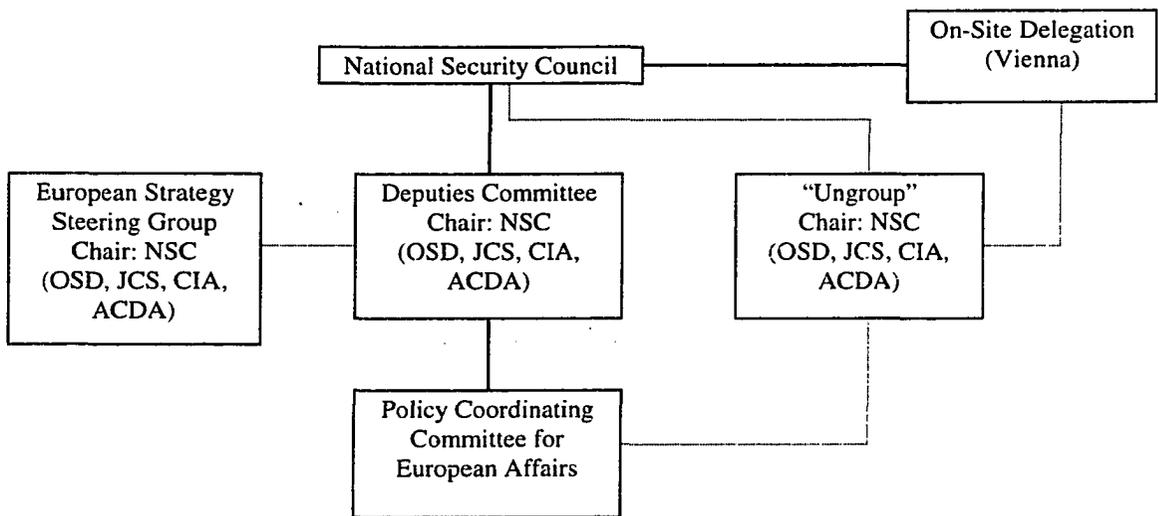
With such high level focus on the issue, concern over the participation of the military in the inter-agency process seems less relevant. Yet, the interagency process was still important, as high-level attention was not a constant factor. What is more, the national security bureaucracy was still exploring the feasibility of various options emanating from the President and his advisors. As has been the case in all of the previous treaties under study, the Joint Chiefs were represented at all levels of the interagency process.

The same basic structure which served the Bush administration for the START interagency process also served the CFE process. Indeed, in the National Security Council and Deputies Committee, the JCS members were the exact same individuals. And again, the informal group termed “the Ungroup” was also involved in the CFE process. The Ungroup was actively involved in formulating interagency positions, as well as supporting the actual negotiations. Indeed, the head of the CFE delegation often

⁸ John R. Bolton, “The Making of Foreign Policy in the Bush Administration” in

participated in Ungroup meetings when possible. As CFE Delegation Head Ambassador James Woolsey noted, “In negotiations with the Soviets in New York , the Ungroup as a whole came up to the Waldorf. I would shuttle between the Soviets and the Ungroup. I would also report to the group every evening to ‘fine tune’ the issues.”⁹

Chart 6. Bush Interagency Structure for the CFE Negotiations



However, more was happening in Europe than the CFE negotiations. Between the revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe, the dissolving of the Warsaw Pact, and German Unification, CFE was simply one issue of many. What is more, all of these issues were interrelated. As a result of these considerations, combined with the multilateral negotiations among the NATO allies, a special interagency group was formed to reconcile CFE proposals with other aspects of U.S. policy in Europe in order to cope with the

The Bush Presidency: Ten Intimate Perspectives of George Bush, Kenneth Thompson, ed. (New York: University Press of America, 1997), p. 110.

ongoing changes. First convened in February 1990, the European Strategy Steering Group (ESSG) was chaired by Deputy National Security Advisor Robert Gates and contained many of the same individuals that participated in the Deputies Committee or the Ungroup. The JCS was represented by the Vice Chairman, Admiral David Jeremiah, as well as the Assistant to the Chairman, Lieutenant General Howard Graves.

However the creation of the ESSG also reflected the Bush administration's penchant for centralization, as well as unconventional formats. It was an *ex-officio* group established among a select group of experts in European security issues.¹⁰ At the same time, the NSC created this group, in part, to forestall the creation of similar groups within the bureaucracy. Undersecretary of State for International Security Policy Reginald Bartholomew and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz were starting to organize similar deliberations under their leadership. Blackwill wanted these reflections to be run by the White House, where he could exert more influence over them, and where the group could be chaired by the powerful and very capable Gates. Blackwill also thought that the group ought to extend beyond the usual circle of arms control officials to include State Department Specialist Robert Zoellick. Since State Department's protocol might make it difficult for Zoellick to chair a state-led group rather than the nominally more senior Bartholomew, running the group from the White House also made it easier to transcend the department's own bureaucratic rivalries.¹¹

⁹ Telephone interview with former CFE Delegation Head Ambassador James Woolsey, 2 February 1998.

¹⁰ Telephone interview with former Army Representative to the Chairman's Staff Group Colonel Rich Witherspoon, 18 January 1998.

¹¹ Philip Zelikow and Condoleeza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 442.

Hence, the Bush administration, while being largely driven by the highest levels of the United States government, did have a functioning and active interagency process in order to research and explore various options for the CFE negotiations. And while many of the interagency groupings were ad hoc and centralized on the White House, the military was actively involved in every aspect.

II. Impact of the Joint Chiefs in the Formulation Process

a. 1989, Formulation During Admiral Crowe's Tenure

Once the Bush administration took office in January 1989, the CFE process was just getting underway. It presented a fortuitous opportunity for the President to display his leadership of the NATO alliance by presenting a daring CFE proposal. However, there was disagreement among the U.S. government as to what that position should be. What is more, there were also foreign governments interested in the formulation process, as this multilateral treaty would affect them, as well. Indeed, U.S. negotiating positions from the interagency process were classified as secret until they were approved by the rest of the NATO alliance.¹² In addition to these constraints, the dramatic events in Eastern Europe began to call for even more daring reductions, less CFE becoming totally divorced from the emerging political reality in Europe. In essence, the international context began to shape negotiating positions more than policy proposals from the national security bureaucracy.

International momentum on conventional arms control began to accelerate in December 1988 when Mikhail Gorbachev announced significant unilateral reductions of

¹² St. John interview, 11 November 1997.

Soviet Forces during a UN speech. He declared that the use or threat of forces "could no longer be an instrument of foreign policy." As a result, Gorbachev pledged to shift Soviet military doctrine to purely defensive role and reduce Soviet forces in Eastern Europe by one million men.¹³ The pronouncement gave the initiative in conventional arms control to the Soviets and left the Bush administration struggling to regain some of the initiative (and credit) for the rapidly proceeding negotiations.

The CFE negotiations were actually underway before the Bush administration was prepared to make any bold new proposals. Starting on March 9th, the new administration had been in office for slightly more than a month when the initial negotiations began. As a result, the first negotiations were a stale rehashing of the conventional arms control positions that had been discussed previously. The U.S. position focused on reductions on tanks and armored personnel carriers, but not combat aircraft – an important point for the Soviets. As a result, the first round of negotiations ended later in March with very little accomplished. The United States was not prepared at that point to alter its approach to conventional arms reductions.

This was partly because George Bush came to the White House unsure of the new climate in arms control. He initially had reservations about the accommodation with the Soviet Union engineered during the second Reagan term. In addition, skepticism about Soviet motives combined with uncertainty about the future of Gorbachev continued to make the new administration rather cautious. As a result, President Bush initiated a

¹³ Michael Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), p. 10.

major foreign policy review, designed partly to distance the Administration from its predecessor and partly to assess the seriousness of the new Soviet thinking.¹⁴

The resulting document was known as National Security Review-3. Drafted by the State Department with the cooperation of the NSC, it contended that Gorbachev's policies were in the United States' best interests. It further contended that the United States should strive to make the reforms "irreversible" by institutionalizing and formalizing their progress. With regards to conventional arms control, this meant that the United States should proceed with the CFE treaty negotiations.¹⁵ And the JCS were in full agreement on this score. Research being led by the Department of the Army had come to a similar conclusion. As Rogers and Williams note, "For their part, key individuals negotiating conventional arms control for the Army adopted a strictly military perspective – if the Soviets would agree to the asymmetrical cuts then the United States should accept it."¹⁶ Indeed, in the Spring of 1989, the Army Chief of Staff had begun exploring plans to reduce NATO force levels by as much as 25 percent, provided the Soviets reduced their forces to the same level.¹⁷

However, despite the planning, there was not much movement on the U.S. position through the Spring. Indeed, it was not until the visit to Moscow by Secretary of State Baker in May 1989 that the administration concluded at the top level that Gorbachev was serious and that co-operative engagement with the Soviet Union should be pursued more vigorously.

¹⁴ Rogers and Williams in Croft, "The United States and CFE," p. 92.

¹⁵ Beschloss and Talbot, *At the Highest Levels*, p. 43-45.

¹⁶ Rogers and Williams in Croft, "The United States and CFE," p. 82.

¹⁷ Dan Oberdorfer, "NATO, Soviets Set for Force Cut Talks." *Washington Post* 5 March

This is not to suggest that there were no policy deliberations regarding CFE. Many in the administration, including Bush himself, were frustrated that Gorbachev was stealing the headlines and were looking to retake the initiative with bold proposals of their own. In March, Scowcroft suggested a “zero-option” for CFE, hoping to get ahead of Gorbachev in the bidding war in arms control. This would have U.S. forces withdraw from Western Europe and Soviet forces withdraw from Eastern Europe. However, the proposal never left the NSC. NSC Staffer for European Affairs, Robert Blackwill, criticized the plan heavily, citing the pitfalls of getting into a bidding war with USSR. There were also concerns about Gorbachev’s proposals widening divisions within NATO. Sensing the potential opposition from the National Security establishment if he went public, Scowcroft backed off.¹⁸

Still, Scowcroft continued to formulate a workable proposal. In a May 15th meeting with Bush’s principal foreign policy advisors, he proposed a new strategy which offered limited cuts to U.S. and Soviet forces in Central Europe. Defense Secretary Cheney, one of the most cautious advisers regarding the authenticity of Soviet reforms, protested. He complained that, in an effort to get out in front politically, “we would be making a big move that was not well thought out.” However, JCS Vice Chairman General Bob Herres, representing the Joint Chiefs, said he thought the Chiefs could accept some form of Scowcroft’s proposal. The meeting ended with the President wanting to move forward in refining the proposal. The JCS was sent off to “do the homework.”¹⁹

1989, p. A34.

¹⁸ Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, pp. 37-9.

¹⁹ Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider’s Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), pp. 462-3.

As the NATO's 40th Anniversary Summit neared, Bush began to pressure his advisers for a workable proposal. He directed Cheney and Crowe to "energize" the CFE process. In particular, Bush ordered Cheney and Admiral Crowe to come up with a plan that was "front-loaded" with significantly lower troop levels on both sides. As opposed to Secretary of State Baker and National Security Advisor Scowcroft's position, which advocated adjustments that covered manpower and armor, Cheney was still reluctant to alter the existing NATO position. JCS Chairman Crowe, like Cheney, was concerned about the military consequences of the new plan, as well as clearing it with his NATO counterparts. In particular, he was concerned that such a proposal would aggravate the long-standing anxiety of NATO allies that superpowers were negotiating their fate over their heads.²⁰

Still, Crowe attempted to fashion a workable plan, given the President's policy orientation. In discussing the plan with the Joint Chiefs, he noted that Congress had been demanding for years that Western European governments share a larger portion of their continent's defense burden. He also noted that any U.S. withdrawal would be partial and gradual. He asked the chiefs to provide the "kind of give the president is looking for" by relaxing their old refusal to allow aircraft to be included in a CFE agreement. At the same time, Crowe agreed that the 25 percent force cuts proposed by Secretary Baker would "make a mockery of forward defense and jeopardize the alliance."²¹ Hence, with Admiral Crowe leading the way, the Joint Chiefs attempted to fashion a workable plan that reconciled the policy view of the President with the concerns of the Joint Chiefs.

²⁰ Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, pp. 74-5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

On the weekend before Bush's trip to the NATO summit, Crowe presented the military's proposal at the President's vacation home in Kennebunkport. He told the President that 5 to 10 percent reductions were "doable," but Baker's preferred 25 percent cuts would require a 'whole new strategy' for Western Europe. He contended that the plan would knock out so many combat support units that the forward strategy would lose its credibility. Moreover, even if Baker got his way, "we would only have made a minor dent in the Soviet Union's overall strength. Most importantly, we would provoke one hell of an argument in NATO councils." As Crowe argued, if the European allies began to doubt the viability of the U.S. defense strategy this would complicate efforts to persuade NATO that the time has come to reduce US troop presence in Europe.²²

The disagreement over the CFE initiative continued until the President called a meeting of his top national security advisers on May 22nd at the White House. Baker renewed his call for a 25 percent reduction. Cheney and Crowe continued to oppose such large cuts, much to the annoyance of the President. Given the political pressures that Bush felt to match the initiatives that were coming from Gorbachev, these recommendations were not well received. Bush complained, "You guys aren't helping me much. You've got all these reasons why I *can't* do things. I want to show that the United States is leading the alliance."²³ Crowe then offered that the military could accept a 20 percent reduction and not upset the current strategy. With this concession by the

²² George Wilson, "Bush Halved Proposal to Cut Forces," *Washington Post* 12 June 1989, p. A1. See also, Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, p. 76.

²³ Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, pp. 76-7. James Baker contended that "Crowe acted as though Leonoid Brezhnev were still running the Kremlin." See, James Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), pp. 92-3.

JCS, the proposal was accepted by the group and became the basis for the U.S. proposal on conventional force reductions that were proposed by the President at the NATO summit.

President Bush's initial proposal for CFE was also impacted by foreign political leaders. With the multilateral nature of this treaty, versus the bilateral nature of the other agreements in this study, this should not be a complete surprise. For instance, after the initial proposal was crafted in the American bureaucracy, senior administration officials had to personally present the plan to the various allies.²⁴ Further, shortly before Bush announced his position at the NATO Summit, French President Mitterand visited him to discuss some alliance issues. In particular, he was concerned with British Prime Minister Thatcher's pressuring of German Chancellor Kohl on the Lance missile issue, a short-range nuclear weapon. In order to alleviate this quarrel, Bush secured an agreement from Bonn that Short-Range Nuclear Forces (SNF) negotiations would not begin until after CFE was negotiated and the implementation process was underway. In return, Bush promised to expedite CFE, by agreeing to the Soviet push for a more inclusive agenda (e.g., aircraft and helicopters). As Talbott and Beschloss note, "Under Mitterand's influence, Bush's focus shifted from the reasons for doing less in CFE, which were military, to the reasons for doing more, which were diplomatic and political."²⁵

The May 1989 initiative caught many in the United States government, including the CFE delegation, by surprise. Bush was moving quickly – sometimes with little or no

²⁴ St. John interview, 11 November 1997.

²⁵ Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, p. 77. See also, J. Philip Rogers and Phil Williams, "The United States and CFE," p. 93.

interagency analysis.²⁶ This lack of consultation with the CFE experts in the bureaucracy revealed the top level attention CFE was receiving during this period – attention that was unprecedented in the entire history of European arms control.²⁷ Certainly this high-level attention was welcome, particularly after the decades of neglect that MBFR had suffered under. Still, there was concern that the administration might advance proposals that might not be thoroughly researched.

b. 1989-1990, Formulation During General Powell's Tenure

The CFE negotiations continued to make steady, though not dramatic, progress towards an agreement during 1989. But 1989 was a pivotal year in Central Europe, and the resulting changes would significantly affect conventional arms control. First, the collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe in the autumn would have a major impact on CFE. With the revolutions in Eastern Europe, what had initially appeared as a very important set of negotiations seemed rather insignificant when compared to the massive political changes taking place. German Reunification would also affect the CFE treaty. The opening of the Berlin Wall on November 11, 1989 precipitated several important internal debates within the United States foreign policy establishment regarding the future of CFE negotiations. How would a unified Germany be counted in such a treaty? These events, combined with the unraveling of the Warsaw Pact alliance, were making the earlier CFE proposal irrelevant.²⁸ In these debates there was gradual recognition that

²⁶ Witherspoon interview, 18 January 1998.

²⁷ J. Philip Rogers and Phil Williams, "The United States and CFE," p. 94.

²⁸ R. Jeffrey Smith, "Warsaw Pact Shifts Impel Offer." *Washington Post* 1 February 1990, p. A12.

although the talks were no longer a way of achieving greater stability in the military confrontation in Europe, they retained significance as a means of bringing the military situation in Europe into line with new political realities.²⁹

Yet, CFE had to keep up with those political realities in Europe. As part of his May 1989 proposal to energize the conventional arms control talks (CFE), Bush had suggested setting a ceiling on U.S. and Soviet stationed troop strength of no more than 275,000. That would have meant a modest reduction in U.S. forces and a withdrawal of no more than half of stationed Soviet forces. To respond to the momentous events of 1989, Bush pushed for new initiatives from the bureaucracy. He was presented with three new alternatives. Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, General Colin Powell of the JCS, and NATO's military chief, U.S. General John Galvin, wanted to hold to the 275,000 figure and not trigger a debate over how far to cut. Scowcroft and the National Security staff contended that the debate could not be avoided, so they wanted Bush to shape it with his own proposal dropping to a floor of 200,000 U.S. troops and codifying this figure in the CFE treaty. Secretary of State Baker wanted to retain 275,000 troops until after CFE was signed, but then promise unilateral cuts down to 200,000.

Bush preferred the NSC approach, but he wanted to make sure that no new initiative would get in the way of wrapping up a CFE treaty in 1990. To this end, the President asked the Pentagon to pick an optimal number for U.S. troop strength close to 200,000. They came up with 195,000 for the Americans and Soviets in Central and Eastern Europe and a grand total of 225,000 for all of Europe by 1994. Such cuts would eliminate about a quarter of American troop strength in Europe and the majority of Soviet

²⁹ J. Philip Rogers and Phil Williams, "The United States and CFE," p. 97.

deployments in Europe outside of the USSR.³⁰ The proposal also advocated reductions in military aircraft, a strong enticement to the Soviets.³¹

The President presented this initiative in the 1990 State of the Union request.³² The proposal was accepted by the Soviets at the Ottawa Conference the next month.³³ However, the speed of the agreement rankled the Pentagon. They were annoyed that Secretary of State Baker's arrangement in Ottawa confined the military to only 30,000 troops outside of Central Europe. Civilian and military defense officials had reservations over their earlier proposal to the President and wanted more room to mix and match according to force planning needs and availability of bases. They believed that Baker had hurried the process to a conclusion without letting their representatives participate in the negotiations or allowing them adequate time to consult about the deal with the Secretary of Defense or Joint Chiefs of Staff. But Baker had negotiated the accord based on force levels the Defense Department had earlier recommended to President Bush as adequate.³⁴ Hence, regardless of the military's reservations, the proposal was one which they had played a significant role in crafting.

Analysis

The CFE formulation process shows how arms control negotiations can be greatly accelerated if the conditions are right. The dynamic international context produced a

³⁰ Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed*, pp. 170-171.

³¹ R. Jeffery Smith, "U.S. Offers Compromise on Military Planes in Europe." *Washington Post* 31 January 1990, p. A16.

³² Smith, "Warsaw Pact Shifts," p. A12.

³³ R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S., Soviets Reach Troop Cut Agreement." *Washington Post* 14 February 1990, p. A23.

positive environment for arms control.³⁵ With the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in flux, unique opportunities to reduce armed forces to coincide with the new political realities were presented. This, in turn, spurred direct involvement of the most senior decision makers in Washington. If the opportunity was to be taken advantage of, the U.S. government had to move quickly.

I. JCS Involvement

The Joint Chiefs were able to keep pace with the accelerated formulation process for CFE. With the organizational reforms of the 1980's, the Chairman was able to lead the JCS to arms control positions in an expeditious manner. At the same time, organizational reforms can only explain part of this situation. The character of the two JCS Chairmen, Admiral William Crowe and General Colin Powell, was also significant in explaining JCS participation. As noted in the last chapter, both of these men were classified as 'bureaucratic manipulators' and were very politically astute. Their leadership of the JCS kept the military voice prominent in the CFE formulation process.

The military voice was prominent in both the CFE and START processes during the Bush administration. However, there were difference in these two agreements. For instance, the character of the interagency process was quite dissimilar. While both relied on the same basic interagency model, the reliance on the lower levels of the interagency process was far more pronounced in the strategic arms negotiations. The basic position of the government had also already been largely established under the Reagan administration

³⁴ Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed*, p. 424.

for START. As one senior NSC official noted:

One very important difference was that START was an ongoing process that was well along – there existed a fairly well structured set of issues before President Bush came along. So, there was sort of a substantive legacy. CFE, by contrast, really almost started with a blank sheet of paper. Moreover, CFE got real interesting because of a high-level initiative on U.S. and Soviet manpower cuts. That really energized the process. It emerged from outside of bureaucratic channels and worked its way up from there. Little of START was like that – it was more of a ‘bottom-up’ process.³⁶

Still, there were similarities, as well. The basic interagency process was the same. And both had “a high political content,” despite the different bureaucratic commitment.³⁷

There were also similarities and differences in JCS participation between the two agreements, as well. The JCS was fully engaged in both processes – they were present at all levels of the interagency process. Also, the Chairman was one of President Bush’s “inside” advisors for both sets of negotiations. However, there were differences in the character of that participation. Most significantly, the representatives of the JCS were more active in the working group-level processes of CFE because of their expertise in the details of conventional arms.³⁸ As opposed to nuclear arms issues, where civilian policy makers could charge that the military had no special expertise since they had never used such weapons, the military had significant experience and knowledge of the intricacies of conventional arms. However, while they had more expertise in the area, they certainly did not dominate the working-level discussions and their participation in the higher levels was not affected by this expertise. Hence, while not identical, the character of JCS

³⁵ Telephone interview with former Assistant to the Chairman Lieutenant General Howard Graves, 23 February 1998.

³⁶ Senior NSC official interview, 29 January 1998.

³⁷ Telephone interview with former JCS Chairman General Colin Powell, 9 March 1998.

participation in CFE and START were largely similar.

Conclusion

Bush's approach to CFE took a very political view towards the conventional arms negotiations. Even beyond the multilateral aspect of the treaty negotiations, CFE was bound up in the tumult of events that would culminate with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. As a result, CFE served many political purposes beyond arms control. As Rogers and Williams note, "In mid-1989 Bush and Baker tended to see CFE partly in political terms of alliance management, partly in terms of domestic politics and partly in terms of . . . a means to reinforce political changes in the Soviet Union. In short, a variety of considerations combined to prod the Administration into a much more positive approach to CFE."³⁹

But the JCS was somewhat cautious in agreeing with the administration. As the decade of the 1990's began to unfold, the JCS made some incremental revisions in its estimates of the declining Soviet threat. Changes in procurement and planning were at first highly gradual, reflecting the caution that gripped the Joint Chiefs, as well as the nation's other military planners. Time was needed to study the issues before dramatic reductions could be endorsed by the military. For instance, the military was more comfortable with the conventional arms negotiations after a 1990 study concluded that once Russia withdrew its forces from Eastern Europe, it would take two years for her to mobilize for an invasion of Western Europe. In consequence, the U.S. could afford to

³⁸ Graves interview, 23 February 1998.

³⁹ J. Philip Rogers and Phil Williams, "The United States and CFE," p. 94.

reduce its forces-in-being and still have time to build up if an invasion seemed likely. Certainly an inclination toward military preparedness or arms control depends in large measure on one's assessment of external threat. The Joint Chiefs, as the keepers of the nation's security, tend to take a more cautious view towards a changing international environment. But the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a reassessment of the foreign military danger facing the United States. The resultant downgrading of this menace paved the way for the JCS to endorse historic reductions in military preparedness and an equally historic array of arms control measures.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Martin Goldstein, *Arms Control and Military Preparedness from Truman to Bush* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Co., 1993), pp. 238-243.

Conclusion

“Keepers of the Security”¹

A number of significant factors affecting JCS participation in arms control formulation have been uncovered by this study. First of all, institutional factors affect JCS participation in the arms control interagency processes – at a minimum, their institutional position appears to guarantee them a seat at the table in the formal interagency process. Inclusion in informal interagency groupings appears to have been a significant factor in JCS participation, but the limited use of these groupings during the course of this study prevents a definitive conclusion. Personal factors are also significant. During this study, the ideological consistency between the JCS Chairman and the Secretary of Defense could be a powerful obstacle or catalyst to JCS participation in arms control formulation. The political skill of the JCS Chairman could also enhance military participation in the interagency process. In fact, during the tenure of more politically astute JCS chairmen, the Chiefs even proposed some arms control initiatives in contradiction to the conventional wisdom that they are “evaluators, not initiators.”

This study has also uncovered some factors which do not affect JCS participation, despite the conventional wisdom. First, the type of weapon being negotiated did not significantly affect the interagency structure or the military role within the arms control formulation process. Also, the Goldwater-Nichols defense reforms do not appear to have

significantly increased the position or power of the JCS Chairman in the interagency process. Finally, contextual factors were important in understanding the formulation process, but these factors affected all members of the interagency process – they had no unique impact on the JCS.

Institutional Factors

Realizing the political importance of securing military support for its arms control policies, every administration in this study has ensured that the JCS was included in the formal interagency structure.² As one NSC official put it, “what was clear to me was that, to outsiders, it would appear that the JCS were well and thoroughly represented throughout the process.”³ Formally, the JCS could not have asked for more involvement in the interagency process.

At the same time, this study has shown that the formal interagency structure may be less relevant if there are prominent informal interagency forums which are really driving the process. Whether informal groupings would be employed, and who would be included, has been the choice of the president and senior administration officials. JCS participation in these forums has been less consistent. Certainly, the participation of the JCS was dramatically reduced in SALT I due to the “backchannel” negotiations being conducted by Kissinger (of course, this was not unique as the entire interagency process

² It is important to note that the JCS has also recognized this phenomenon and has pushed for agreements in treaty form where there was some question of whether to conclude a treaty or an executive agreement. In an executive agreement, their support before the Senate would not be necessary and they would have less power in the formulation as a result.

was in the same predicament). However, the JCS was not always on the “outs” in these informal groupings. In the Bush administration, the JCS, via their chairmen, were active players in the START and CFE processes – players in Bush’s inner circle of advisers. In the end, their involvement in such informal forums is predicated on the desires of decision-makers at the highest levels – often times, the President himself.

Organizational reforms within the JCS hold the possibility of improving the institutional position of the military in arms control formulation. The reforms of Goldwater-Nichols have given the Chairman a more solid position in which to lead the JCS. This, in turn, has given the JCS an ability to be more timely in the provision of their advice. In this study, the comparison of strategic arms treaties was inconclusive. However, the ability of the JCS to keep pace in the CFE process is suggestive that the Goldwater-Nichols reforms may have had some success. But it is important not to overstate the point. The Chairman has always been the nominal head of the JCS, even if it was not formalized in the law. Hence, while the reforms did provide some structural improvements, it largely recognized a pre-existing reality. What potential benefits this may hold for the JCS in the interagency process remains to be seen.

Personal Factors

Beyond presidential prerogative, JCS participation has also been influenced by personal factors, such as the personalities of the JCS chairmen involved. Indeed, the personal dynamic of JCS participation within any interagency grouping has been a strong

³ Confidential telephone interview with a senior National Security Council official, 29 January 1998.

explanatory variable in understanding any variation over the time-period of this study. This is due to personal factors which are both external and internal to the Chiefs.

Regarding external factors, the relationship between the JCS and other interagency actors, particularly the Secretary of Defense, is a crucial factor in their participation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, despite their unique bureaucratic position, are still subordinate to the Secretary of Defense. As a result, the OSD can often shape JCS advice to the president. Certainly that was the case with Robert McNamara, who attempted to exclude and obviate JCS participation in the Johnson administration's SALT formulation process. The Secretary of Defense can also inhibit the ability of the JCS to forge alliances with other interagency actors outside of the Pentagon. In the Reagan administration, Caspar Weinberger inhibited the ability of the chiefs to meet with the State Department -- degrading cooperation and contact between the two, though not completely stopping it. The most contentious relationships between the JCS and other interagency actors were manifested when their outlooks on the benefits of arms control differed greatly. When their ideological positions were consistent, however these relationships can actually be beneficial to the JCS. In the Bush administration, for example, the relationship between Defense Secretary Richard Cheney and the JCS, particularly during the tenure of General Colin Powell, enhanced the role of military advice in the process. But for good or for ill, the relationship with other interagency actors, particularly the Secretary of Defense, is an important variable in understanding JCS participation in the interagency process.

In terms of internal factors which can affect the quality of JCS participation, this study has given significant attention to the personal attributes of the Chairman. With

regard to the personal attributes of the Chairman, those who had significant political attributes – those that were classified as “Bureaucratic Manipulators” – appeared to be more successful at advancing the position of the JCS in the interagency process.

Certainly if we look at those who were “bureaucratic manipulators” – Wheeler, Jones, Crowe, and Powell – as opposed to those who were not – Moorer, Brown and Vessey – we see a marked difference in the levels of success in the interagency process. As

Admiral Crowe pointed out in his memoirs, the logic is fairly clear:

The great advantage of having high-level military people with long experience in Washington is that they (one hopes) have become practiced in at least some of the political arts. Politically sensitive officers know who is beholden to whom, who is amenable to persuasion, and what kind of persuasion they are amenable to. They know how to muster their allies and constrict the province of their adversaries.⁴

Those, like McKittrick, who suggest that the personal relationship between the JCS and their superiors oversimplify the process. It is the Chairman’s political skill in dealing with his superiors that is more important. For instance, David Jones was able to achieve some notable successes in the early START process despite being a holdover from a previous administration and having an acrimonious relationship with the Secretary of Defense. The ability of the Jones in 1982 to use the SIOP requirements to leverage administration conservatives into a more pro-JCS START proposal is evidence of this. General Wheeler overcame a similar problem with Robert McNamara in the Johnson administration. However, this is not to contend that the political skill of the Chairman can completely dictate the success of the JCS in the process. Rather, it is a question of inches. A JCS Chairman will have a voice in the process, regardless of his political

acumen. But the additional expertise may be the difference between success and failure. In essence, political skill matters at the margins.

Contextual Factors

This study has also shown that contextual variables impact the arms control formulation process. Public opinion is an important factor impacting the interagency process. As was seen in the Reagan-era negotiations, public opinion can make a difference. For instance, the Reagan administration initiation of strategic arms negotiations was partly in response to outside pressures in the American public demanding progress on arms control. In a sense, public opinion sets the parameters over what are acceptable policy options. For instance, the opposition of certain elements of the Mormon Church to any mobile basing strategy for the MX missile in Utah and the western states essentially foreclosed that policy option to all members in the interagency process.⁵ Similarly, Congress can also affect the entire process. As we saw with the “build-down” proposals in the START process, Congress may actually begin to generate policy options in order to keep the administration progressing on arms control. Given their power in reflecting public opinion, funding the new weapons systems that the administration requests, as well as their role in the ratification process, Congress plays a key role in the formulation process even though they may not be directly involved in the interagency process. Certainly Jimmy Carter recognized this in his desire to have members of Congress sit-in on the SALT II negotiations in 1977.

⁴ William Crowe, *In the Line of Fire: From Washington to the Gulf, the Politics and Battles of the New Military* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), p. 229.

The international context can also affect the interagency process – largely by setting the pace of the negotiations. Certainly the rise of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and the resulting international changes, particularly in Eastern Europe, offered a unique opportunity to achieve arms control agreements. One need only recognize that the last arms control treaty that was ratified prior to Gorbachev’s rise had been in 1972 (SALT II was never ratified by the Senate and so never officially went in to force). After Gorbachev’s rise to power, there were agreements on strategic arms, intermediate nuclear arms and conventional arms within a span of six years. But it is important to note that none of these contextual factors have any unique impact on the JCS. They affect all of the players in the interagency process.

Chart 7. Summary Table on JCS Participation

<i>Agreement</i>	SALT I		SALT II		INF		START			CFE		
<i>Administration</i>	LBJ	Nixon	Carter		Reagan		Reagan			Bush		
<i>JCS Chairman*</i>	W	M	B	J	J	V	J	V	C	P	C	P
Formal participation of JCS	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Informal Interagency Groups	x	-	x	x	x	-	x	x	+	+	x	+
Political skill of CJCS	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+
Ideological affinity	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	+	+	+	+

* JCS Chairmen are identified by the first letter of their last name.

- Key: “+” Benefit for JCS participation
“-” Obstacle to JCS participation
“x” No informal grouping noted
“0” Not a significant factor to JCS participation

⁵ Telephone interview with Edwin Firmage, 13 April 1999.

Not all variables that were considered in this study turned out to be significant. For instance, the type of weapon being considered did not have any significant impact on JCS participation in the process. In terms of committee memberships and the weight of military advice, participation in the Bush administration CFE process was not appreciably different from the Bush administration START process.

Above is a summary table of the main variables affecting JCS participation. It shows that the Chiefs were formally involved in every agreement under study, but that there were some instances where they were excluded from informal groups. The final two categories consider personal factors – the ideological affinity between the JCS Chairman and the Secretary of Defense, and the political skill of the JCS Chairman.

Institutional Perspective and Military Advice

Certainly, the policy advice of the Joint Chiefs is affected by the institution that they represent. Their primary consideration of arms control agreements is how the resulting agreement will affect the ability of the United States to protect itself. For instance, the JCS were not averse to giving up the Pershing II missiles in the INF agreement because they were not critical to U.S. national security, as seen by the chiefs. As a result, the chiefs have typically not been the leading strategic thinkers in arms control formulation. Very often they did not see the political trade-offs that are necessary in negotiation.

This is particularly true when considering "bargaining chips." In numerous instances, senior policymakers have supported the creation of weapons systems solely for the purpose of negotiating them away to the Soviets. This was done in the Nixon era with

ABM defenses and the cruise missile. In both of these instances, the Joint Chiefs came to the position that these "bargaining chips" were militarily necessary and therefore were "bargaining chips" no more. This is similar to the thesis of Milburn and Christie, who contend that the American investment in the Vietnam war was perpetuated by the investment itself. This is what they term "effort justification." They find that the strongest and most frequently reported effect of effort is that of increasing the perceived worth of that for which one labors.⁶ This was particularly true in the case of the cruise missile. While the ABM defense was something that the military thought was necessary from the beginning, the cruise missile was originally understood to be a "negotiating tool" with the Soviets.⁷

A similar phenomenon was seen in the Reagan era with the Pershing II missile and SDI. However, neither appear to have been driven by effort justification. With reference to the Pershing II, the JCS did originally perceive it as a bargaining chip. They later came to fight for this weapon system. However, the JCS hedged on the Pershing II issue late in the INF process because they believed that it was more valuable than the draft treaty indicated. The Soviets had given up a lot in the last year of the INF negotiations and some of the chiefs wanted to hold out and see how much more the

⁶ Thomas Milburn and Daniel Christie, "Effort Justification as a Motive for Continuing War: The Vietnam Case" in *Psychological Dimensions of War*, Betty Glad, ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1990), pp. 236-240.

⁷ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 34. It is interesting to consider that the Pentagon was not originally interested in the cruise missile, given its widespread military application in this day and age.

Soviets would concede.⁸ With reference to SDI, despite their initial enthusiasm, the costs of the research program were prohibitive. With the declining defense budgets of the late 1980's, the JCS was faced with financing SDI research at the expense of conventional forces that were already operational. As a result, the chiefs eventually backed away from supporting SDI.⁹

The chiefs are typically concerned with how best to defend the U.S. within the limited resources which the American public will provide for that process. Given these facts, the chiefs were often moderate in their advice. For instance, they instinctively opposed such radical proposals as Carter's deep cuts initiative or Reagan's zero ballistic missile initiative. Certainly the perception that they would be the most conservative is clearly wrong. For instance, during the Reagan administration the civilians in the Defense Department often advocated the more hawkish policies, such as deploying INF and SDI as methods for achieving a strategic advantage over the Soviets.¹⁰ But neither were the JCS great doves – witness their opposition to Carter's "Deep Cuts" initiative. As former JCS Chairman General John Vessey noted, "We weren't great arms controllers. But if there was something we could do to obviate the need to spend dollars for particular weapons programs that could be used elsewhere more efficiently, then the Chiefs were not against arms control."¹¹

⁸ Telephone interview with Air Force Chief of Staff Larry Welch, 3 March 1998. Some military leaders outside of the JCS, particularly the NATO Commander, did fall into the cycle of effort justification. See, Crowe, *Line of Fire*, pp. 195-196.

⁹ Michael R. Gordon, "Pentagon Offers Plan to Help Smooth Arms Talks," *New York Times* 16 June 1989, p. A6.

¹⁰ Stevn Kull, *Minds at War: Nuclear War and the Inner Conflicts of Defense Policymakers* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 211.

¹¹ Telephone Interview with JCS Chairman General John Vessey, 10 March 1998.

This unique perspective leads to a couple of implications. First, the members of the Joint Chiefs are less driven by political imperatives than some other players in the decision making process. Because their terms do not end with any given administration, they can – and often do – take a perspective on U.S. goals which go beyond the political inspirations of a given administration. As Admiral Jonathan Howe, a former Assistant to the Chairman as well as head of the Politico-Military Affairs branch at the Department of State, noted, “the Chiefs act as an anchor on the politically-driven enticements of arms control.”¹² Second, the JCS traditionally take a more cautious approach to arms control. While both arms build-ups and arms control are supposed to lead to the same objective – greater stability and security – that does not mean that the JCS were willing to rush into agreements. In numerous interviews, former members of the JCS noted that the JCS was typically in favor of achieving arms control agreements.¹³ However, they typically resisted moving forward if they felt that the negotiations were being rushed unduly. Certainly, Admiral Crowe’s opposition to concluding a START agreement in Reagan’s second term is evidence of this.

However, to say that they bring a unique perspective to the interagency process is not to claim that they are the only military experts in the process. Certainly, the civilians in the defense department would take issue with that assertion. This has been particularly true in strategic arms, where the JCS has no more practical experience in the employment of these weapons than anyone else. JCS Chairman General Earl Wheeler once

¹² Howe interview, 20 November 1997.

¹³ Telephone interview with former Air Force Chief of Staff General Merrill McPeak, 15 March 1998. Telephone interview with former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Frank

commented that he would not know how to use one nuclear weapon to achieve one military objective.¹⁴ As a result, in several instances, civilian policymakers ignored the military experience of the JCS in favor of their own expertise. This was certainly the case with McNamara and his “systems analysis.” It was also the case with the defense conservatives in the Reagan administration. For instance, while the JCS was willing to give up the Pershing II missile, conservatives in OSD saw the missiles as “militarily necessary” because of their ability to eliminate Soviet command and control sites quickly.¹⁵ These people believed that the JCS had no special knowledge in nuclear arms despite their years of military service.

The unique perspective of the JCS impacts the nature of their participation in the interagency process. Their instinctive caution impedes their tendency to lead in arms control initiatives. As former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral James Holloway noted, “the Chiefs are evaluators, not negotiators.”¹⁶ Certainly, there have been instances where the JCS has initiated arms control proposals – one need only remember “Count or Counter” in SALT II or the formal move away from SDI after Reagan left office in 1989. However, it is important to note that these initiatives took place under the guidance of chairmen who this study has classified as “bureaucratic manipulators.” Politically sophisticated chairmen are more adept in the interagency process. If the reforms of Goldwater-Nichols have truly led to more politically-sophisticated leaders being selected

Kelso, 1 February 1998. Telephone interview with former ACDA Director Ambassador Paul Warnke, 12 February 1998.

¹⁴Warnke interview, 12 February 1998.

¹⁵ Arthur M. Cox, *Russian Roulette: The Superpower Game* (New York: Time Books, 1982), p. 26.

as JCS Chairman, then more initiatives can be expected in the future. But over the course of this study, JCS participation has been characterized by its caution.

Arms Control Formulation and the JCS

Certainly further studies on this issue, given the release of new documentation, will shed additional light on the military's role in the arms control formulation process. During this time period, we have seen the JCS as loyal administration advisors. Very rarely did the chiefs attempt end-runs around the administration by appealing to allies in Congress or media leaks. But this is only one period of 24 years and deals with only one issue. Certainly in other time-periods and other issue contexts -- for instance, military policy during the Vietnam war -- the military was less loyal to the political masters that they served.¹⁷

Arms control formulation in a democracy, in short, is a complex process. There are a variety of actors who come to the negotiations, each with their own view of what is in the "country's" best interest. As General John Vessey noted, "the interagency process really mirrors the politics of the country."¹⁸ Some political appointees may be inclined to hold the goals of the administration as paramount. Some, however, may also reflect a structural perspective -- for instance, Secretaries of State and their personnel seem to be more inclined towards an agreement, sometimes with less regard to the security questions. Certainly, the JCS reflects a structural interest in preserving the national

¹⁶ Telephone interview with former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral James Holloway, 19 February 1998.

¹⁷ Richard Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 19.

security of the country. Be that as it may, this study has shown conclusively that the JCS during this time-period are significant players in the arms control arena. How much so depends on several factors – some internal to the JCS and some not. Still, what is clear is that as “keepers of the security,” the Joint Chiefs of Staff bring a unique and important perspective to U.S. arms control policy formulation.

¹⁸ Vessey interview, 10 March 1998.

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